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A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF
NATIONAL BOARD- AND NON-NATIONAL BOARD-CERTIFIED TEACHERS' BELIEF SYSTEMS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
2000

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ABSTRACT

This study interprets the professional belief systems of 15 seasoned educators from three different groups: (1) five National Board-certified teachers, (2) five National Board candidates who did not receive certification, and (3) five teachers who did not choose to seek National Board Certification. The research examines participants’ individual and group belief systems and compares their professional roles with their perceptions of the core propositions for accomplished teaching established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). In addition, it specifically explores participants’ attitudes toward receiving validation of their teaching abilities in areas in which they consider themselves to be accomplished. The study was conducted to gain an in-depth view of how participants are working, both independently and/or under the auspices of the NBPTS, to advance teacher professionalism. Results are presented both to illuminate a timely educational reform issue, National Board Certification, and to promote greater understanding and unification of teachers’ perspectives for accomplished teaching and educational renewal in the United States.

The study utilizes Rokeach’s (1972) belief systems theory to formulate interview questions that explore participants’ professional beliefs, attitudes, and values toward the role of accomplished teaching. These findings are then compared to the NBPTS’s core propositions for accomplished teaching. Data was collected from January of 1999 (when
pilot study work began) to June of 2000 (when member checks were completed) through
use of individual interviews, focus group interviews, and grounded surveys.

Polkinghorne’s (1995) method for data analysis and write-up, known as narrative
analysis and analysis of narratives, is utilized to present significant findings both within
and across participants.

The desired goal of this study is to make a meaningful contribution to the
profession by adding to the thin body of research that presently examines educators’
perspectives on the NBPTS. By taking an in-depth look at a small group of teachers’
beliefs, attitudes, and values toward improving the profession, the study reveals that
National Board Certification is often neither desired nor pursued by many respected
educators. Instead, findings suggest that, while the widely agreed-upon tensions of
school culture may drive some educators to seek National Board Certification, those same
stresses often discourage other would-be candidates from becoming certified. It is hoped
that the dialogue that was opened throughout this study in interviews, focus groups, and
grounded surveys may serve as a catalyst for other educators to initiate discussions of the
stresses common to the profession so that remedies may be discovered. While these
findings show that National Board Certification may provide one potential vehicle for
professionalization of some educators who are capable of negotiating their way through
the written discourse community, further research must uncover and support the fine
work of educators who, for various reasons, fail to receive or do not choose to seek
National Board Certification.
Dedicated in loving memory of my grandfather, Herle R. Baumbaugh

"Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed."

Proverbs 16:3
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Finally, I thank our Lord. He has shown me that through Him, all things are possible.
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PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS


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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

For the better part of the 20th century, educators and theorists have struggled to define, codify and solidify the professional body of knowledge that constitutes "teaching excellence." In their attempts to define teaching as a science, researchers have probed and analyzed content, technique, methodology, and outcome, as well as the prevailing standards that govern the practice of teaching. Accomplished teaching resists formulaic definition, and, more often than not, represents a blend of skillful art and applied science that must continually respond to ever-changing sociological, societal, and cultural demands.

Despite these unique and challenging dynamics, two major reform groups have emerged for raising educational standards in the United States at the close of the 20th century (Zemelman et al., 1998). Accountability reformers, the first, is comprised mainly of state legislators, governors, education agencies, and business panels. To raise educational performance, these reformers focus primarily on establishing assessment and accountability systems linked to punishments and rewards. The other, curriculum reformers, includes primarily classroom teachers, subject-area experts, professional
organizations, and research centers. Rather than focusing on external controls for
renewing educational systems in the United States, these reformers promote the
improvement of instructional methods. Thus, there is renewed interest in codifying
and recognizing the qualities and standards that comprise accomplished classroom
teaching (Meier, 2000).

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), created to
promote high standards for teacher performance and overall professionalism recognizing
accomplished teaching through national certification, has taken a middle-of-the road
approach in the midst of this turbulent debate. The organization has appointed to their
Board of Directors both accountability- and curriculum-oriented members from within
and outside of the field of education. As a result of this shared leadership, questions have
been raised regarding the degree of ownership and input that educators themselves -- a
group that traditionally has been sidelined by authorities outside of its field (Meier, 2000)
-- wield in an organization they dominate, at least in numbers.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

Ostensibly, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization directed by a majority of
practicing teachers and a small number of public officials, the NBPTS was established by
the Carnegie Commission in 1987, in response to growing criticism that the U.S.
educational system was falling rapidly behind the other leading countries of the world.
The NBPTS’s 63-member Board of Directors is composed primarily of active classroom
teachers who form the majority of every NBPTS committee (NBPTS, 1991). Of the 42
teacher professionals elected to the board, 14 are chosen for outstanding teaching
accomplishment, 14 are professionals recognized as leaders of subject areas, and 14 are considered to be outstanding teacher union leaders. The remaining 21 members of the board are selected from a variety of fields that must include governance or management responsibilities for public schools.

A fundamental tenet of the NBPTS holds that permitting educators to codify high standards of pedagogical skill and professional excellence will empower and enhance the educational profession as a whole (NBPTS, 1991). The NBPTS asserts that the benefits will include increased personal accountability, greater professional expertise, and enhanced public status for teachers.

Ultimately, the NBPTS aspires to improve and enhance the way in which both educators and the public recognize and codify beliefs regarding accomplished teaching. These goals center on developing accomplished teachers who effectively impact student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, dispositions and commitments reflected in five core NBPTS propositions (NBPTS, 1991, p. 13):

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning;
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach these subjects to students;
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning;
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.
The Theoretical Framework of the NBPTS

The core propositions of the NBPTS have been informed by a number of theoretical frameworks prominent in educational reform today. The NBPTS educational renewal agenda represents a strategic blend of both accountability- and curriculum-oriented reformers (Zemelman et al., 1998). Because NBPTS is so highly diversified in its composition, it is careful to make teachers feel welcome by placing the spotlight on curriculum reform issues. This way, it can promote teachers’ perspectives for educational renewal that traditionally have been subjugated to reform agenda driven by the “expert judgement” of authorities outside of schools (Meier, 2000).

Next, the NBPTS is creating a “discourse community” (Swales, 1990) that seeks to uphold standards by requiring teachers to argue in writing towards the ways in which they address those standards (Burroughs et al., 2000). As with many other professions, the NBPTS’s attempts to further professionalize teaching offers an opportunity for members to match their practices with the ability to articulate their professional beliefs and values. Studies of “professions” have shown that professional knowledge is partly controlled through the framing and control of discourse related to the profession (Abbott, 1988; Yinger, 1999).

The NBPTS has renewed emphasis on the value of reflective teaching. Reflection, according to John Dewey, is “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further consequences to which it leads (1933, p. 9). The NBPTS asserts that if
students are to gain the critical thinking and inquiry skills necessary to compete in an ever-changing world, teachers must first model these skills to students (NBPTS, 1991).

Social constructivist learning theory clearly influenced NBPTS's core propositions. This theory of learning, popularized by Vygotsky, asserts that understanding is a result of interaction through activity and dialogue with a more capable peer (Vygotsky, 1967; Woolfolk, 1995). This extends to the ways in which learning occurs for both educators and students. The NBPTS views accomplished educators as those who "seek the advice of others and draw on education research and scholarship" (NBPTS, 1991, p. 25). Emphasis on collaboration extends to the students of teachers who are seeking National Board Certification. Rather than allowing students to recoil from difficult learning tasks, National Board Candidates are encouraged to empower students to work together by providing tools that inspire curiosity and the ability to develop meaningful problem-solving skills. The value of peer interaction is seen in the NBPTS's guidelines for accomplished practitioners that require them to "orchestrate learning in group settings" while also seeking to "place a premium on student engagement" (NBPTS, 1991, p. 22).

The NBPTS maintains a holistic view of the accomplished practitioner by addressing not only the subsequent content and pedagogical skill of seasoned teachers (Shulman, 1986), but the "dispositions and commitment" that typify quality educators (NBPTS, 1991, p. 13). In applying this holistic framework to methods for teaching, the NBPTS supports curriculum integration for meeting the learner's broader needs. Teachers are encouraged to cultivate not only students' knowledge and skills but to nurture "beyond the cognitive capacity of their students" (NBPTS, 1991, p. 19).
Prominent child development researchers Katz and Chard (1989) assert that an appropriate holistic education approach addresses cognitive, emotional, moral and aesthetic development. Therefore, the ultimate goal of accomplished practitioners is to facilitate students' ability to form critical understandings from a broad-based education focusing on both skill and personal relevance (Fogarty, 1991).

Finally, a sociocultural emphasis is apparent in the NBPTS’s core propositions. Reminiscent of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) social-ecological approach to child development, the NBPTS asks teachers to recognize and factor in individual differences among students based on the context and culture in which these students have developed understandings. Teachers are expected to “adjust their practice, as appropriate, based on observation and knowledge of their students’ interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, family circumstances and peer relationships” (NBPTS, 1991, p. 13). Teachers are seen as capable of making knowledge accessible to all students through the understanding and application of prevailing learning theory. The NBPTS challenges teachers to inspire in students “respect for diversity and appreciation of cultural differences” (NBPTS, 1991, p. 14). Teachers thus positively engage parents and the community in the work of the school.

**Rationale for this Study**

Philosophical and theoretical notions of accomplished teaching in the United States are often thought to vary widely across teacher preparation institutions, schools, and individual teachers (Sykes & Wilson, 1988). Utilizing belief systems theory (Rokeach, 1968) as a framework for understanding, this study examined the beliefs,
attitudes, and values that a small group of educators held toward their professional roles. According to Rokeach, values deeply influence and guide an individual’s chosen course of action. Additional research on teaching beliefs and practices, likewise, suggests that the thoughts, decisions, and judgments motivating educators also significantly influence their teaching practices (Oser, Dick, & Patry, 1992).

It is illuminating and instructive to examine the ways in which educators currently understand and validate their beliefs about their professional roles. While a growing number of teachers are seeking validation of their professional beliefs by applying for National Board Certification, it is unclear where those not seeking National Board Certification are obtaining validation.

This study explores the ways in which teachers codify and prioritize beliefs about their professional role. Secondly, it critically examines the day-to-day relevance of the NBPTS’s five core propositions in the professional practices of three groups of educators: those who have sought National Board Certification and achieved it, those who have sought it and not achieved it, and those who have chosen not to seek National Board Certification. Finally, the study examines the ways in which a variety of educators sought validation of beliefs about their professional role.

The following rationale applies to this study:

1. In an era of accountability reform in education, it is vital that teachers’ perspectives for curriculum reform and professional renewal be studied and made public through the presentation of educators’ voices in narrative studies such as these.
2. Few qualitative studies have asked teachers themselves to critically examine the relevance and accuracy of the NBPTS’s core propositions for accomplished teaching in their day-to-day professional lives. This study will shed new light on professional educators’ perceptions of the appropriateness of the NBPTS’s criteria for evaluation.

3. The study’s focus on both educators who have sought National Board Certification, and those who have not, will provide useful comparative data that may help to clarify how these differing groups of educators codify and prioritize their beliefs, attitudes, and values regarding their professional roles.

4. By exploring the ways in which teachers seek validation of their professional role beliefs, including but not limited to achieving National Board Certification, the public will gain a broader “insider’s” view of the meaning of accomplished and professional teaching from educators themselves.

Utilizing qualitative research methodology with an emphasis on interpretive inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the researcher identified, described, analyzed, and compared the distinct belief systems embraced by participants toward the teaching profession. The researcher analyzed participants’ lived experiences through the use of Polkinghorne’s (1995) narrative analysis and analysis of narratives. Thus, the inquiry first proceeded in an inductive fashion by capturing participants’ anecdotes and placing them into a larger context to represent each participant’s story. Next, analysis of narratives enabled the researcher to compare similarities and distinctions across participants and groups to deductively draw meaningful implications for the further professionalization of teaching.
Research Questions

The following questions were applied to three different groups of educators: (1) five certified National Board participants, (2) five National Board candidates who did not receive certification, and (3) five teachers who did not choose to seek National Board Certification.

Question 1. What beliefs, attitudes, and values do participants hold toward their roles as professional educators in the classroom, school, and wider community?

Question 2. How do participants’ beliefs, attitudes, and values support or challenge the five core propositions for accomplished teaching established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

Those five core propositions are:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning;
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach these subjects to students;
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning;
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience; and
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

Question 3. In what ways and for what reasons do participants seek to validate their belief systems regarding their roles as professional educators?
Definition of Terms

For purposes of this study, the following terminology applied:

Professional
A person considered to possess the methods, character, or standards held by a group of highly trained individuals engaged in a specialized area of study.

Validation
Validation is the support of belief systems by seeking approval from sources that are considered by participants to be authoritative.

Belief System
Belief systems provide a framework for understanding the organizational structure of an individual's attitude, values, and resultant behaviors (Rokeach, 1968; Grube, Mayton, & Ball-Rokeach, 1994). Beliefs constitute a set of predispositions that, when activated, result in a distinct preferential response toward a given object, situation, or person (Rokeach, 1968). Beliefs may be descriptive, evaluative, or prescriptive in nature.

Attitude
According to belief systems theory, individuals develop attitudes when a number of beliefs surrounding a particular object or situation are formed (Rokeach, 1968). Attitudes include three essential elements that are very closely related: cognitive, affective, and
behavioral components. These components dictate individual's feelings about a situation, the intensity of the feeling, and the behavior that results.

**Value**

Values embody the shared cultural modes of behavior that are adopted by an individual relative to certain societal conditions. Values may be arranged and rearranged as the individual attempts to reconcile personal needs with societal demands (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984).

**Limitations**

The sample population included a total of 15 participants comprised of three distinct groups of educators currently teaching in Central Ohio. The first group consisted of five certified National Board participants; the second included five National Board candidates who did not receive certification, and the third included five teachers who had not chosen to seek National Board Certification. Due to the small size and nonrepresentativeness of the sample group, findings are not generalizable across other teacher groups (Morgan, 1988; Morgan & Krueger, 1993). However, according to Kvale (1996), use of qualitative methods permits the researcher to collect rich data on a theme of interest that is rather in-depth and results in a new construction of understanding between persons. Rather than producing findings that are generalizable, this data may be used to provide substantial insights and views related to similar problems in understanding teacher beliefs about professional roles (Miles & Huberman, 1994a).
An additional limitation in the study is the inability of the researcher to use observation as part of the triangulation of methods. According to Pelto and Pelto (1978), while the primary method for data collection should be interviewing, it is recommended that interview data be crosschecked with observation. To address this limitation, the researcher chose to triangulate data collection methods utilizing individual and group interviews with grounded survey findings. By triangulating these methods, the researcher sought to access the point of view of various groups of educators (Miles & Huberman, 1994a).

Implications

It is unlikely that educators will critically examine inherent beliefs guiding their practice until they are asked to dialogue about the rationale surrounding that practice (O’Loughlin, 1992; Wertsch, 1991). To facilitate such dialogue, this study utilized individual and group interviews and grounded surveys that gave participants an opportunity to reflect on and discuss their professional beliefs. By studying practice elements that were common or unique to these educators, comparisons were made with respect to the NBPTS’s core propositions. A secondary agenda was to identify alternative forms of work-related validations that were meaningful to these educators. This study presents a snapshot depicting multiple ways of understanding teacher professionalism and a variety of teachers’ views on educational renewal.
Overview

The balance of this study is organized as follows: Chapter 2 presents a literature review exploring current reform issues surrounding teacher professionalism and belief systems today. In particular, Chapter 2 closely examines the impact the NBPTS has had on recent educator reform. Next, Chapter 3 describes the methodology utilized in the research study. Chapters 4 and 5 present research findings through the use of Polkinghorne’s narrative analysis and analysis of narratives techniques. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses the findings and implications of the study as applied to both educational research and practice.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This literature review will explore traditional beliefs held by educators and the public regarding the role of the American teacher throughout the past century. It will first present Rokeach’s belief systems theory (1968) as a lens for understanding the multiple ways in which educators make sense of their professional roles. Next, it will provide an historical overview of teacher professionalism throughout the United States. Finally, this section will explore and probe assumptions on which the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has based its five core propositions regarding the role of the accomplished teacher.

Belief Systems Theory

Several studies have demonstrated a correlation between teacher beliefs and the manner in which educators interact with and instruct their students (Pajares, 1992; Winfield & Manning, 1992). Further, it has been observed that students’ academic
performances are directly linked to the beliefs held by their teachers (Aguilar & Pohan, 1996; Rist, 1970). "The beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, and, in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom" (Pajares, 1992, p. 307).

Due to the implications of this phenomenon, and the potential for influencing student learning outcomes, it is vital that teachers carefully consider and challenge their professional beliefs. Ultimately, this will help their students to reach their greatest potentials.

Belief systems theory (Rokeach, 1968) thus provides a kind of "lens" to view teachers' feelings, attitudes, priorities, and behaviors related to education (Grube, Mayton & Ball-Rokeach, 1994). This framework also assists researchers in identifying conditions necessary to maintain or change teacher belief systems. In addition, it examines teachers' ability to reflect on their own beliefs regarding the ways in which they teach and perceive the process of student learning.

Analogizing belief systems theory as a lens for viewing the complex ways in which people perceive the world and act upon it, Rokeach (1968) asserted that, while humans possess perhaps "tens, possibly hundreds of thousands of beliefs" (p.1) upon reaching adulthood, that belief systems theory furnishes the organizational structure that prevents chaos among these countless beliefs.

Belief systems theory is guided by a number of basic assumptions (Rokeach, 1968). First, the theory presumes that individuals rank beliefs according to differing levels of importance. While some beliefs are more functionally connected to an individual's life, others are less central. Findings suggest that beliefs concerning self-concept are of the greatest importance to individuals (Eagly, 1967). Secondly, belief
systems theory assumes that an individual’s central beliefs are highly resistant to change. The more a belief is connected to other central beliefs, the greater is the protection for such a belief. Finally, the theory accepts that the greater the importance a belief holds for an individual, the greater the potential a change in this belief has for altering the person’s entire belief system.

Rokeach asserts that all interactions in life are “directed by one’s hierarchically organized cognitive system of beliefs, attitudes, and values. This cognitive system will remain stable to the extent that it will maintain or enhance societally originating self-conceptions concerning competence and morality (1968, p. 262).”

Rokeach distinguishes between the three components of belief systems theory functioning as an integrated cognitive system: beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Beliefs, according to Rokeach, constitute a set of predispositions that when activated, result in a distinct preferential response toward a given object, situation, person, or the self (Rokeach, 1968). Beliefs may be descriptive, evaluative, or prescriptive in nature. Descriptive beliefs are empirical beliefs about phenomenon that do or do not exist (I believe that the sun sets in the west). The second type of belief, evaluative, involves making a judgment regarding good and bad (I believe that this candy is good). The third type of belief, prescriptive, includes beliefs that advocate a particular course of action that is desirable/undesirable (I believe that it is good for children to eat vegetables). Upon establishing a number of beliefs surrounding a particular phenomenon, an attitude is formed.

Attitudes, according to Rokeach, involve a relatively enduring organization of descriptive, evaluative, and prescriptive beliefs that have particular cognitive, affective,
and behavioral components. These components are related very closely to one another, making their effect on one another nearly impossible to separate (Rokeach, 1968). The cognitive component of an attitude represents a person’s knowledge about what is true or false, good or bad, desirable or undesirable. The affective component of an attitude represents the varying intensity one places on the object of the belief when its validity is argued. Finally, the behavioral component involves a response predisposition that, when activated, leads to action.

Values comprise the final piece of the belief systems theory. Values embody the shared prescriptive modes of behavior adopted by an individual relative to certain societal conditions. Rather than emphasizing the beliefs of the individual apart from interaction with others, values are arranged and rearranged as individuals continually attempt to reconcile their needs with societal demands (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984).

Research suggests that beliefs held for the longest number of years appear the most difficult to change (Bruner, 1966). In order to change a belief, an individual must experience some degree of cognitive dissonance in which new ideas cause the person to struggle to reconcile prior understandings (Bandura, 1969). Rosenberg’s consistency theory (1960) concurs that individuals strive to maintain consistency among the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components within a single belief, among two or more related beliefs, among all the beliefs entering into an attitude organization, and among all of the beliefs and attitudes entering into a total system of beliefs.

Applied to education, a change in belief systems may occur as teachers realize that their actions do not complement their feelings, attitudes and priorities.
Many of the attitudes and values held by American teachers are the direct result of educators readily adopting a system of cultural norms that has been perpetuated by the general public rather than by professional educators themselves.

The Historical and Philosophical Background of the NBPTS

A New Vision for Teacher Professionalism

For more than 150 years, our system of education has enhanced virtually every facet of American society, from business and industry, to government and labor, to our national standard of living. A strong case can be made that our very quality of life is tied directly to the quality of education so readily available throughout the country (Carnegie Forum, 1986).

There can be little doubt then, that the quality of education in the United States, in turn, is dependent upon the professional skills and capabilities of America’s classroom teachers, the driving force behind the educational system (NBPTS, 1991). Entering the new millennium, these educational practitioners must be prepared, equipped and organized to meet unprecedented cultural, technical and societal changes, as well as the challenges and opportunities facing our ever-complex global community. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) clearly seeks to play a leading role in helping to shape America’s teaching force in the 21st century.

The NBPTS began to take form in the mid-1980s, after a series of published papers suddenly and dramatically placed education in the public forefront, and squarely in the path of criticism. Responding to the 1983 federal report, *A Nation at Risk*, which outlined serious concerns regarding the state of education in the United States, President
Ronald Reagan commissioned a special task force to examine the professional role that teachers might serve in improving the effectiveness of schools. In 1986, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy published its own response, *A Nation Prepared* -- a plan to address the educational shortcomings of America’s schools. The Carnegie Forum strongly advocated the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Soon after, in the fall of 1987, the NBPTS was formed. The organization consisted of a 63-member board of directors, most of whom were classroom teachers in elementary and secondary schools. Additional members included prominent figures in public and higher education, political arenas, and business. These educational leaders laid the foundation they hoped would establish rigorous professional standards for seasoned educators across the United States. The goal of the NBPTS was not only to respond to the alarming education reports of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, but to systematically and permanently unite educators as a major force in transforming teaching into a highly respected profession, capable of meeting and exceeding those challenges (Lewis, 1994).

**Teacher Professionalism During the Early 20th Century**

In order to understand how the teaching profession and the field of education reached such a state of crisis and disunity, one must look back to the years of American history in which the nation’s forces outside of education sought unity through standardization of schooling. In the face of turbulent social, political, and economic change, Americans traditionally embraced education as the foundation upon which society was structured. Americans looked toward the great tradition of public education
as a tool for achieving effective citizenry (National Commission, 1983). Throughout history, initiatives such as the establishment of land grant colleges, vocational programs, the G.I. Bill, the National Defense Education Act, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act demonstrated the willingness of the American public to invest in education as the solution to transmitting a common cultural perspective (Doyle, 1983). Since the founding of the Office of Education in 1867, the federal government assumed responsibility for collecting, comparing, and disseminating information related to America’s schools (Smith, 1984). As a result of attempting to preserve mainstream popular ideologies, the beginning of organized American education was marked by the utilization of large-scale comparisons and standards setting (Sykes & Plastrik, 1993). Comparisons of educational standards across state and national levels have remained a vital, yet controversial part of American education reform today.

One notable exception to the welcoming of academic standardization in the United States occurred during the early 20th century. With a plan for utilizing excellence in education to achieve a better society, John Dewey’s work of the early 20th century laid the theoretical groundwork for promoting teacher professionalism. In contrast to mainstream reformers’ high opinion of educational standardization and accountability, Dewey was guided by his ideologies and commitments to well-debated models of quality schooling (Shulman, 1984). Throughout the development of the Progressive Movement, Dewey fought the rigidity and passivity of school curriculum that failed to engage children in the synthesis and application of learning (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Dewey viewed the interconnectedness of the home, school, government and broader society as a prime model for democracy, in which people made decisions through discussion, debate,
and the use of reason (Dewey, 1927). As a result of teaching children to approach the tensions of society through dialogue, Dewey believed that young people would grow into productive members of society (Dewey, 1927). Rather than focusing on the establishment of minimal standards for learning competency, Dewey chartered a brilliant plan for higher academic achievement by upholding the vision of teachers as strong and capable educational leaders (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Dewey thus was an early pioneer in setting the stage for teacher empowerment.

Competing with Dewey’s Progressive Model of education reform were the effects of the industrial revolution on America’s schools. As immigration steadily grew throughout the early 20th century, many Americans found themselves attending public schools driven by industrial models of cultural and academic standardization (Doyle, 1983). During this period, authorities in education designed and implemented systematized methods of instruction for teachers to administer obediently. In effect, the school administrator became the foreman; the teacher, the worker, and the student became the product (Doyle, 1983). This rigid model presented a significant stumbling block to Dewey’s Progressive Movement in which teachers were given the authority to design effective curriculum to meet the particular needs of their students. Because of a shortage of highly trained teachers required to successfully implement Dewey’s style of teaching, the Progressive Movement in education eventually deteriorated (Cremin, 1965).

In its place, the 1920s saw a widespread movement towards efficiency through standardization (Darling-Hammond, 1996). This push toward standardization was initiated and driven primarily by forces outside of the classroom. During this time, American schools increased the use of standardized achievement testing (Teale & Sulzby,
This phenomenon was to continue into the post-war triumph years of the 1940s and 1950s in which American confidence in industrial and educational standardization remained high. In effect, the general public was satisfied with the widespread teacher proofing of school curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 1996). It wasn’t until the launch of the Russian satellite Sputnik in the late 1950s that a critical U.S. public began to question the effectiveness of America’s schools in transmitting basic skills necessary to compete in an ever-increasingly technical society. While the decade of the 1960s brought with it a resurgence in progressive styles of education, the student rebellions of the 1960s and 1970s combined with a serious economic downturn to prompt a “back to basics” movement (Parker, 1993). This movement entailed a return to rigid standardization by revoking the teacher’s right to customize curriculum instruction and assessment to meet students’ needs. As a consequence, early in the 1970s, many American children were bombarded with minimum competency tests (Doyle & Hartle, 1985). This trend expanded into the 1980s to encompass mandates for higher standards for graduation, increased emphasis on student assessment, and a tightening of teacher licensure standards (National Commission, 1983). As the early 1990s approached, attention focused on developing national assessments and curriculum frameworks. Efforts were redoubled toward developing more appropriate assessments of both students and teachers (Sykes & Plastrik, 1993).

This growing emphasis on standards-based systems has been particularly frustrating and disheartening to many teachers. As policy makers have invested in prescriptions for uniform practice across teaching, many educators have been denied the tools with which they are able to reach the unique needs of their students (Cascio, 1995).
Instead of empowering educators to challenge learners according to their particular abilities and interests, schools have often become places in which rote-oriented learning is encouraged and students fail to understand the real-world applications for their learning (Carnegie Forum, 1986). *Prisoners of Time*, the 1994 report by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning, lamented that many American students had received diplomas as a result of completing time at school, regardless of whether they had mastered course content (Doyle & Pimentel, 1997). The solution? Researchers of the early 1990s initiated reform measures that echoed the call of Progressives from long ago. By agreeing that schools must become places in which students genuinely learn, reformers looked to the transformative promise of empowering teachers. Researchers argued that changes would occur as schools cast off outdated industrial models of schooling in which students and teachers operated as if part of a mass production system. Recognizing that this mode of operation had become most ineffective by the early 1980s, educators turned to modern solutions for their modern education problems (Doyle & Pimentel, 1997; Carnegie Forum, 1986).

The realities of the post-industrial, knowledge-based world created an unprecedented need for “human capital.” No longer would blind allegiance to authority lead to international industrial competitiveness. Instead, flexible thought and intelligence were recognized as the major vehicle for creating wealth in America’s businesses (French, 1997). It was here, in this time of social, political, and economic uncertainty, that proponents of a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards emerged. Proposing that school reform might best occur under a standards-driven system initiated by teachers’ grassroots efforts, leaders of education sought freedom from the
bureaucratic regulations that, heretofore, had crippled educational reform. As the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards unfolded, the organization promised that teachers themselves would become key forces in designing and implementing curriculum standards and performance-based assessments. By ensuring teacher ownership of these responsibilities, the NBPTS anticipated an unrivaled level of productivity and accountability in education (Doyle & Pimentel, 1997; Shanker, 1996).

The 1970s and 1980s: An Alarm Sounds

During the 1960s, James Coleman (1966), a prominent sociologist, released a controversial report entitled Equality of Educational Opportunity (later known as the Coleman Report). This study contended that educational achievement was directly related to students' family environments rather than their academic training. As a consequence, many Americans began to believe that schools simply did not make a distinguishable impact on the well being of society (Doyle & Hartle, 1985). Also as a result of Coleman's report, the 1970s became a period of questioning the weaknesses of America's educational system (Doyle, 1983).

In the ensuing years, President Reagan formed the National Commission on Excellence to explore the economic and social implications of a failing education system (Doyle, 1983; NBPTS, 1998). The Commission's report, A Nation at Risk (1983), sought to address the general perception of major deficiencies in the national education system. Evidence suggested that rival nations were matching and surpassing American educational attainments through longer hours of schooling and more rigorous standards of performance.
Lamenting the lack of national attention focused on modernizing American education during the second half of the century, the Commission (1983) charged, “We have in effect, been committing an act of unthinking unilateral educational disarmament.” The Commission’s report further underscored the failure of the American educational system to keep pace with the rapidly changing global society.

To address this concern, the National Commission presented six issues for exploration (1983):

1. Assessment of the quality of teaching and learning in the nation’s schools
2. Comparison of U.S. educational institutions with those of other nations
3. Comparison of college admission requirements to abilities of high school graduates
4. Identification of programs resulting in students’ college success
5. Assessment of the impact of social and educational influences on achievement
6. Determination of barriers to excellence in education

Not surprisingly, the Commission cited as major barriers to excellence in education, low teacher salaries and a lack of professional status accorded to teaching. To bolster the profession and to help attract more qualified candidates, the Commission recommended a restructuring and enhancement of performance-based salaries for more qualified teachers, and a system of career salary ladders for all levels of educators.

**Carnegie Forum Advocates Raising, Redefining Educational Standards**

Answering the call to action advocated in *A Nation at Risk*, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force assembled in 1985. The Carnegie Task Force
focused on the relationship between national economic growth and the quality of America’s education (Carnegie Forum, 1986). In its report, *A Nation Prepared* (1986), the Forum echoed prior concerns that America’s education system was failing to keep pace with changing social, political, and economic trends throughout the world.

Unemployment figures, for example, were skyrocketing as traditional jobs in mass production environments requiring repetitive skills, were being rapidly displaced by a demand for better educated, more highly skilled laborers (Carnegie Forum, 1986). Similarly, broad demographic changes, including increases in populations of minority groups, children living in poverty, and workers coming of retirement age, presented unprecedented challenges to American society and its educational system (Carnegie Forum, 1986). Raising and redefining educational standards of excellence would be crucial prerequisites to strengthening America’s educational system, according to the Carnegie Forum. To achieve these goals, the Forum believed it was necessary to create a teaching force of the highest professional caliber, equal to any and all challenges.

In order to reposition the teaching profession at the cutting edge, sweeping changes were needed. The Forum utilized *A Nation at Risk* (1983) to develop and articulate specific recommendations for how teaching might be professionalized. The report, entitled *A Nation Prepared* (1986), included recommendations to:

- Create a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- Distribute lead teachers to guide school redesign
- Require a bachelor’s degree in the arts and sciences to teach
- Reexamine graduate education curriculum
- Prepare minorities to teach
• Provide incentives for performance
• Realign teacher’s salaries with other knowledge-based careers

The Forum reasoned that by empowering teachers to establish collectively their own standards for educational excellence, educators would rise to a higher level or professional accountability. As a result, schools would greatly improve.

The NBPTS is Born

The Forum was convinced that capitalism would survive and flourish well into the 21st century, provided America’s educational system was able to meet the challenges posed by an ever-widening global market (Carnegie Forum, 1986). Similar to Dewey’s Progressive Movement earlier in the century, the Forum believed that through empowering teachers as professionals to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students, they would be capable of helping students to achieve learning that went beyond the minimal standards already in place. To cope with the changing social and economic needs of the country, the Carnegie Forum asserted that teachers must help students to expand their knowledge base through utilization of higher-order thinking skills. Students would develop these skills by manipulating solutions for problems in unexpected and non-routine ways. By helping students to gain a solid intuitive grasp of the ways in which physical and social systems operate, learners would become independent problem solvers able to lead the businesses and organizations in which they would eventually become employed (Carnegie Forum, 1986). The Forum believed that the way to reach these heightened standards of excellence was to hire teachers who
possessed or were motivated to personally develop these problem-solving skills themselves (Carnegie Forum, 1986). Answering the call put forth by A Nation Prepared, many citizens and policy makers realized that the most important action the nation could take was to improve its schools through strengthening its teaching force (NBPTS, 1991). Thus, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was established in 1987.

The Mission, Goals and Process of National Board Certification

The Board of Directors

A voluntary, 63-member board composed primarily of classroom teachers governs the NBPTS. Prominent government, education, business, and union stakeholders throughout the United States also represent the Board. Operating as a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, the NBPTS primarily draws its monetary support from federal funding, but also from corporate grants and various foundations.

In 1987, the NBPTS set out on a mission to codify the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and commitments that experienced teachers agreed were essential elements of an accomplished practice. By claiming to support teacher initiative and inventiveness, the NBPTS expressed confidence in its ability to reclaim educational excellence for America’s schools.

Assumptions Guiding the NBPTS

In order to develop these higher standards of professional competence, the Board solicited the collective expertise of many prominent educational consultants and researchers. Lee Shulman, current president of the Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching, developed a prototype to inform the assessment and curriculum model used by the National Board (Sykes & Wilson, 1988). The work of Shulman was based on a number of underlying assumptions surrounding educators' coherent paradigms for effective teaching and learning that, heretofore, had gone untapped.

First, the project assumed that a professional body of knowledge existed from which teachers drew their practice. This body of knowledge was acquired from various resources such as students, subject matter, and experience. The 63-member Board further built upon this body of knowledge through expert input from teachers and educational leaders.

Second, the group sought to address a deficiency surrounding the knowledge base of teaching. This deficiency left teachers without a way for codifying and disseminating the practical knowledge and experience that they had acquired (Schalock et al., 1998). The NBPTS addressed this need by providing a method to systematize knowledge drawn from the consensus of seasoned educators by forming standards for accomplished performance (NBPTS, 1991).

Third, Shulman's commitment recognized that teachers' knowledge could produce many forms of quality teaching. For this reason, the Board supported a wide variety of teaching styles and methods. As a result, assessment emphasized the teacher's behavior and rationale in working with students rather than focusing on a standardized mold for teaching assessment.

Finally, based on his previous research, Shulman placed a renewed emphasis on content-pedagogy (Shulman, 1986). In so doing, the importance of subject matter was
placed in the forefront of teacher assessment programs that had previously focused narrowly on skill development. As a result, the Board effectively issued a call for the return to balance between content and skills, in which subject matter would be applied to real-world situations.

**NBPTS Mission Statement**

The NBPTS sought to improve the quality of student education as well as redefine teaching as a profession by bolstering new incentive structures and institutional arrangements to support the role of the teacher in the United States (NBPTS, 1991). The organization's mission represented an amalgam of both accountability- and curriculum-oriented reform efforts. By supporting teacher initiative and inventiveness, the NBPTS was confident in its ability to reclaim educational excellence for America's schools. The mission identified by the Board was as follows:

*The mission of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is to establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do, to develop and operate a national voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet these standards, and to advance related education reforms for the purpose of improving student learning in American schools (NBPTS, 1997, p. i).*

**NBPTS Policy Position: Five Core Propositions**

As an extension of their mission statement, the Board created a policy position to describe the measurable outcomes of accomplished teaching (NBPTS, 1991, p. 13):
The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards seeks to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, dispositions and commitments reflected in the following five core propositions.

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning. They:
   - recognize individual differences in their students and adjust their practices accordingly;
   - have an understanding of how students develop and learn;
   - treat students equitably; and
   - have a mission that extends beyond developing the cognitive capacity of their students.

2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students. They:
   - appreciate how knowledge in their subjects is created, organized, and linked to other disciplines;
   - command specialized knowledge of how to convey a subject to students; and
   - generate multiple paths to knowledge.

3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning. They:
   - call on multiple methods to meet their goals;
   - orchestrate learning in group settings;
   - place a premium on student engagement;
   - regularly assess student progress; and
   - are mindful of their principal objective in planning instruction.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience. They:
   - are continually making difficult choices that test their judgment; and
   - seek the advice of others and draw on education research and scholarship.

5. Teachers are members of learning communities. They:
   - contribute to school effectiveness by collaborating with other professionals;
   - work collaboratively with parents; and
   - take advantage of community resources.

In identifying and articulating what accomplished teachers should be able to do, these five core propositions ignited a widespread interest in enhanced teacher status and professionalism. This codified set of skills became a national evaluative tool that claimed to recognize accomplished teaching. At present, policymakers currently are linking the NBPTS standards with state licensure and certification, as well as ongoing professional training, across many states (Lewis, 1994).

**The Certification Process**

Developed as a voluntary system, National Board Certification complements but does not replace state licensing requirements. Rather than replacing current licensure procedures, National Board Certification is viewed by many as an option for advanced professional development of educators who have a baccalaureate degree and have taught a minimum of three years accompanied by a valid state teaching license.

The NBPTS has developed more than 30 certification fields that are structured around both student development levels as well as content areas (NBPTS, 1999). Each
area of certification claims to exemplify consensus of the elements of accomplished
teaching for that particular field. Certification standards are created by committees of a
majority of classroom teachers, teachers of higher education, developmental experts, and
leaders in the content fields.

Candidates participate in a two-part performance-based evaluation involving a
portfolio and assessment center exercise. By completing both descriptive and analytical
written exercises that demonstrate competence in each of the NBPTS's core areas,
applicants must exhibit mastery of and the ability to articulate in writing the knowledge,
skills, and abilities that constitute accomplished teaching. Over the course of a school
year, participants typically report spending a minimum of 120 hours on the assessment
process.

The portfolio portion of the assessment requires candidates to reflect on the
effectiveness of their classroom practice. By collecting student work, artifacts, and
videotapes, the applicant must: provide evidence of the goals and purposes of instruction,
reflect on classroom experiences, evaluate the effectiveness of personal teaching
methods, and develop a rationale for professional judgment. This section of the
evaluation requires a three- to five-month period to complete six portfolio entries.
Candidates submit portfolios by mail according to a designated deadline (either April or
June).

The assessment center exercise comprises the second part of the evaluation.
Taken at a local Sylvan Learning Center during the summer immediately following the
school year in which the portfolio was completed, this evaluative measure entails a
written essay to determine the degree of the candidates' teaching skills and subject matter
knowledge. By organizing the assessment around challenging teaching issues, this aspect is meant to evaluate the teacher's knowledge, skills, and abilities across the age range and subject material of the chosen certification field.

Upon completion of the assessment center exam, candidates typically wait until fall to receive their results. Portfolios are scored according to a scale based on four primary levels of performance (levels 1, 2, 3, and 4) with plus (+) and minus (-) variations at each level. Possible scores range from 1- to 4+. Educators must average a 3 or higher for each assessment section in order to achieve certification. In the event that a candidate fails to pass a section (or sections) of the exam, the score is automatically banked for a period of three years, during which time any combination of entries and/or exercises in the assessment package may be retaken. Candidates currently are assessed a fee of $275 for each entry or exercise retaken (NBPTS, 1999). National Board Certification is valid for a period of ten years and may be renewed.

**Authentic Assessment**

By utilizing a performance-based assessment to certify teachers, the NBPTS upholds the belief in employing authentic assessment for evaluating learning outcomes. Research suggests that instructors can improve their ability to evaluate student learning through portfolio assessment, which allows them to gain a broader understanding of their students' mastery of knowledge and skills (Mitchell, 1993). Likewise, performance-based assessments have been shown to guide instructors' design of learning experiences that help learners to better connect understandings to the real world (Buday & Kelly, 1996; Josefsberg, 1993).
Preserving Teaching Styles

The NBPTS philosophically supports the development of individual educators’ distinct teaching styles (French, 1997). Rather than dictating a “cookbook” approach to which all educators must subscribe, the NBPTS insists it intentionally provides only "core" principles for accomplished teaching. As teachers internalize the standards of accomplishment supported by the Board, they often report that they are capable of meeting these standards by focusing on the meaningful integration of both curriculum and their own pedagogical style (Shulman, 1984). Candidates may thus work to achieve their certification goals any number of ways (French, 1997).

The Reform Agenda of the NBPTS

There are three broad reform issues guiding the NBPTS. These issues work in unison toward the improvement of teacher and student learning (NBPTS, 1991, p. 60). The work of the Board focuses on the following to enhance support of its goals and missions:

1. Creating a more effective environment for teaching and learning in the schools.

2. Increasing the supply of high-quality entrants into the profession.

3. Improving teacher education and continuing professional development.

Creating an Effective Work Environment. In order to establish a more efficient work environment, the NBPTS believes that schools must address such problems as the redistribution of resources, responsibilities, and time for both teacher and
students (French, 1997). Major overhauls must also occur in the teaching and learning environment, according to the NBPTS.

The NBPTS charter seeks to build school environments into more professional and productive workplaces by supporting higher standards for teaching (NBPTS, 1991). In brief, it maintains that this will be accomplished best by helping educators form a more supportive working environment with parents, teachers and administrators (Buday & Kelley, 1996; Rotberg et al., 1998).

Also, the NBPTS looks toward new performance standards to help create a learning environment in which the professional development of teachers becomes a top priority (NPBTS, 1991). To further enhance the teaching and learning environment, the Board publicizes its perspective to policy makers in the community and recognizes and honors professionals who attain certification.

**Increasing the Supply of High-Quality Candidates.** To address its second reform issue, the NBPTS focuses on the recruitment of highly qualified individuals into the teaching profession (Carnegie Forum, 1986). The National Board reports that it is taking particular action to increase the numbers of minority candidates who are currently entering teaching (NBPTS, 1991). By developing partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities, the Board hopes to attract teachers to the standards of educational excellence represented by certification. The Board also actively supports legislation that assists minorities entering the field of teaching (NBPTS, 1991).

**Improving Initial & Ongoing Teacher Education.** The third reform issue supports the improvement of teacher education programs and continuing professional development initiatives. The NBPTS claims that it can affect sorely needed changes and
innovations in these educational arenas (Rotberg et al., 1998). While Board certification focuses on the development of the *experienced* rather than *novice* teacher, the NBPTS believes that new teachers will gain the reflective training and professional habits that will later enable them to become National Board-Certified teachers.

The Board also aims to stimulate a higher quality of professional development and in-service training within schools (NBPTS, 1991). It insists it will accomplish this goal by increasingly including the higher education community in standard-setting dialogues (Carnegie Forum, 1986). In addition, it plans to use fields of inquiry to continually inform improvement of certification standards (Rotberg et al, 1998). In short, the NBPTS’s ultimate goal is to create an unrivaled curriculum and accountability model for professional teacher development.

**NBPTS’s Strategy for Raising the Status of Teaching**

As committee members first discussed their vision for National Board Certification in 1987, their hopes for America’s teachers were many. Looking to regain the respect of the profession in the eyes of the public, the Board was quick to address the call to action stimulated by the *Coleman Report* (1966) and *A Nation at Risk* (1983). Its first and foremost priority would be to fulfill the promise of educational excellence.

By making the career path for teachers more attractive, the NBPTS hoped to stop the flight of accomplished educators and to increase minority interest in teaching as a lifelong career (NBPTS, 1991). The NBPTS felt that qualified candidates could then be attracted to a rewarding career offering such incentives as professional standing, responsibility, adequate pay, and respect (NBPTS, 1991).
Career enhancement through Board Certification might also have a positive impact on other key areas enumerated by the NBPTS: school staffing, staff development, teacher status, career opportunity, instructional policy, and the quality of classroom instruction.

School staffing, for example, might benefit by the enhanced way in which communities viewed the profession of teaching. As increased numbers of qualified candidates are drawn to National Board Certification, the organization hoped that administrators could more easily identify and hire quality educators, rather than having to settle for those who lacked the expertise that came with experience (NBPTS, 1991).

As awareness of National Board Certification spreads, staff may be more likely to select this yearlong opportunity for professional development. Instead of the more commonplace, daylong workshops and traditional in-services, professional development could more fully address proactive issues by making use of the in-depth and ongoing questioning and reflecting inherent in the National Board Certification process (Wise, 1994).

If the NBPTS achieves its goals of making standards of teaching excellence better known, a greater appreciation for the complex demands of teaching in the broader community would emerge. As a result, the public status of teaching would rise (Catoe, 1996).

Certification infers advanced training and higher skills. With the stronger credentialing inherent in National Board Certification, supporters feel that career opportunities will only increase for Board-Certified teachers. Recruiters likely would be drawn to the more highly qualified candidates (Roach, 1992).
Increased social and professional status also brings greater opportunities for impacting instructional policy. The potential to act as a mentor, professional development leader or liaison with university faculty further places accomplished teachers in the forefront of educational reform. And finally, NBPTS-Certified educators are convinced that school administrators and policy makers listen more attentively to their suggestions for improving instructional practice (Lightfoot, 1983).

Collectively and separately, the aforementioned benefits and advantages of Board Certification extend to classroom instruction as well. Higher skills and advanced, focused training are good for teacher and student alike (Tracz et al., 1995).

**Theory Behind the NBPTS**

**Accomplished Teaching**

Having examined the historical context out of which the National Board has grown, it is also relevant to take a closer look at the theory and research undergirding the system’s core propositions. Supporters share that as part of its quest to support America’s economic and social stability, the National Board was adopted in 1987 with the dual goals of improving the performance of both pre-service and in-service teachers (Baratz-Snowden, 1992). Focused on concerns surrounding teacher professionalism, the Board worked to create a plan for the systematic and permanent transformation of the teaching profession (NBPTS, 1991). The NBPTS reports that the reform plan evolved and took form from the experiences of American teachers in the last half of the century, as well as from careful analysis of current research providing evidence that such a concern is valid. The National Board claims to bolster the status of teaching as a highly
professional career by addressing deficits of the national educational system in which teachers operate.

**New Standardization**

National Board proponents insist that NBPTS's standards strive to go far beyond the minimal competence licensure currently required by each state (Cascio, 1995). To gain National Board Certification, experienced teachers voluntarily undergo a scrutiny by their peers. Candidates of National Board Certification are required to hold a valid state teaching license and to have taught for a minimum of three years. Applicants participate in an assessment consisting of two parts. Based on standards of their unique certification field, educators complete a portfolio as well as an assessment center exercise. The portfolio is a collection of student work, videotapes, and other artifacts collected from the teacher's classroom. Candidates must carefully follow guidelines for describing and analyzing their lessons. By rewarding the teacher's innovative application of knowledge and skills, NBPTS supporters feel that this form of advanced certification goes far beyond the current minimum competency standards (Doyle & Hartle, 1985). As awareness of professional standards grows, it is hoped that both educators and the public will gain a renewed respect for Board-certified teachers' levels of competence (Sykes & Wilson, 1988). The creation of advanced levels of performance in the field of teaching will thus fill a great void in a profession that currently lacks standards for systematizing professional renewal (Carnegie Forum, 1986). Proponents share that Board-certified teachers are expected not only to display technical competence but to embody professional responsibility as well (Sykes & Wilson, 1988).
From the start, leaders of the NBPTS realized that there were both tangible and intangible advantages to raising the professional status of teachers. Potential benefits to educators themselves included salary bonus incentives and the possibility for advanced teaching positions within schools. The elevated professional status associated with being “Nationally Board Certified” also held great promise for enhancing teacher education and higher education programs throughout the country. As awareness of National Board Certification would spread, the NBPTS reasoned, undergraduate education students would practice reflective exercises similar to those required in Board assessment (Buday & Kelly, 1996; Roach, 1992). This would unite curriculum- and accountability-oriented reform agendas and raise educational standards for even more teachers, further compounding the benefits of National Board Certification.

**Addressing Negative Career Perceptions**

Even today, major obstacles continue to cloud the positive perception of teacher professionalism. Among these hurdles are lower wage structures for teachers compared to other professions requiring similar levels of education (Darling-Hammond, 1994). In addition, traditional classroom teaching modes have limited the teacher to an isolated role that has failed to focus on the merits of collaboration (Doyle & Hartle, 1985). Professions benefiting from collaboration also gain strength from developing a collective voice and identity. Basic aspects of the teaching modes of operation such as curriculum input and development are often placed in the hands of an administrative hierarchy (Lewis, 1994). The end result frequently leaves the teacher in a restricted role with a disenfranchised
attitude toward the very system within which he/she functions. Ironically, the teacher often joins hands with the public in frustration.

Because collaboration is non-existent in many schools, teachers often have little collective voice in influencing which school policies are implemented (Rotberg et al., 1998). They are rarely given any final say in selecting courses that they will teach or the materials with which they will teach (Cascio, 1995). Rather, educators are expected to passively accept prescribed curriculum mandates (Doyle & Hartle, 1985).

In addition to a barrage of negative outside influences that include invasive government controls, waning public confidence, and perceptions of unprofessionalism, teachers have further added to the suffering within their own ranks. Unlike other professionals such as lawyers, physicians, and architects, educators as a group have failed to codify the set of skills required for accomplished professionalism (Lewis, 1994; Sykes & Wilson, 1988). Rather than taking the initiative to develop their own qualitative standards for what constitutes "professional excellence," teachers have allowed external forces to determine the standards by which they operate (Catoe, 1996; Josefsberg, 1993). As a consequence, many Americans believe that any minimally educated person with the inclination to teach can be effective (NBPTS, 1991). Contributing to this negative attitude toward the teaching practice, an inconsistent wide range of teaching models has been utilized for teacher training in college and university settings throughout the country (NBPTS, 1991).

A direct result of these negative experiences and perceptions is the dwindling number of high-quality candidates in teacher training programs (Wise, 1994). Similarly, the attrition rate for young teachers entering the profession is quite high (Darling-
Hammond, 1994). Sadly, many talented practitioners opt to leave education careers in exchange for the greater reward levels and recognition accorded to other professions. Compared to other professions, starting salaries of educators across the country are substandard, further perpetuating the perception of low career status (National Commission, 1983).

Positive feedback in the form of professional recognition is also in short supply in the teaching profession. As teachers enter the classroom, they soon find that they are rarely recognized for their accomplishments (Cascio, 1995; Wright, 1990). When teachers are treated as if they were all identical, any pride typically associated with professionalism is eventually stripped away (French, 1997). As a result, teachers become proficient at guarding their expertise from public recognition in fear of a backlash from peers (Chittenden & Jones, 1997). Sadly, this phenomenon often inadvertently signals a message to new teachers that their own colleagues do not take their profession or its responsibility seriously (Carnegie Forum, 1986). When teachers choose to advance their careers within a school, typically they find that they must leave the classroom in exchange for an administrative position. Unfortunately, those accomplished educators remaining in the classroom often go unrecognized and underutilized for the educational insight and wisdom they have to offer their schools (NBPTS, 1991).

**Multifaceted Vision for Professionalism**

While the NBPTS does not claim to provide the only solution for regaining honor in the field of education, it is demonstrably committed to teacher professionalism. Professionals, it is generally assumed, are capable of articulating their views, converting
those views into action, and promoting their work through the political process (Barone et al., 1996). By promoting better pay, enhanced status, and improved working conditions for teachers (Doyle & Hartle, 1985; NBPTS, 1991), the NBPTS seeks to qualitatively redefine teaching as a lifelong career, by systematically changing the ways in which schools are staffed and structured. Proponents of the NBPTS maintain that the organization is providing a long-awaited vehicle for educators to become what they always should have been -- the "drivers of school reform" (Lewis, 1994, p. 6).

Empowering Teachers to Define Educational Standards

One of the key goals of the NBPTS is to fulfill a vision for educational excellence in America, which, it believes, can best be achieved if teachers are empowered to define educational standards within their own profession. Research has shown that externally imposed requirements fail to contribute to positive educational reform (Doyle & Hartle, 1985, Zemelman et al., 1998). Rather than passively accept traditional reform efforts mandated from the top-down, many supporters of the NBPTS feel that educators must proactively exercise a strong collective voice. The National Board strives to make this vision a reality by utilizing a board of directors composed primarily of classroom teachers, who work cooperatively to codify the agreed-upon body of knowledge and skills acquired by accomplished educators seeking to raise the standard of excellence for the profession (Carnegie Forum, 1986).

Maintaining that school reform best occurs under a standards-driven system initiated at the teacher-grassroots level, NBPTS leaders are hoping to offset the burdensome regulations and uncoordinated programs created by previous, top-down
reform initiatives. As the NBPTS initiative continues to unfold, the organization maintains that teachers themselves ultimately must become key forces in designing and implementing curriculum standards and performance-based assessments. By ensuring teacher ownership of these responsibilities, the NBPTS may well be providing educators with the long-awaited opportunity to develop their own professionalism (Lewis, 1994).

**Research Behind the NBPTS**

**National Support Increasing**

The NBPTS was given sudden and prominent public exposure in October of 1997 at the First Annual National Board-Certified Teachers Meeting in Washington, D.C. President Bill Clinton and U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley honored the NBPTS Board of Directors as well as a group of over 200 National Board-Certified teachers by addressing the promise of NBPTS for accomplished teaching. More recently, in February of 1999, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley encouraged the entire nation to endorse National Board Certification. He shared a vision for teacher licensing that would recognize "initial," "professional" and "advanced" levels of competence. Riley recognized that advanced licensing already exists through National Board Certification (NBPTS, 1999).

The NBPTS has also drawn strong support from governors and legislators, state and local school boards, business and community leaders, teacher union leaders, higher education officials, and classroom teachers across the nation. Support has been provided in the form of recruitment publicity, orientation and support meetings, financial
incentives, licensure portability and renewal, and public recognition for newly certified candidates.

The NBPTS has also been supported financially with substantial grants from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation. These funds represent approximately 55 percent of the organization's financial support. The remaining 45 percent is funded by non-governmental sources (NBPTS, 1999). A number of prominent contributors include Carnegie Corporation of New York; IBM; Proctor & Gamble; State Farm Insurance Companies, and Xerox (NBPTS, 1998). As a result, the NBPTS acts as one of the nation's leading public/private partnerships.

Members of national organizations such as the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Education Association (NEA), and Pi Lambda Theta have embraced the promise of National Board Certification for the professionalization of teaching. The AFT and NEA have initiated loan programs with affordable payment schedules to ease the burden of the application fee. Pi Lambda Theta, an international honor society and professional association in education, now requires board certification for membership in its association.

**State Support Increasing**

Governors and state policy leaders are increasingly supporting National Board Certification among teachers. As of April 1999, 36 states had enacted legislative and policy action to provide incentives and recognition for National Board Teachers (NBPTS, 1999). By enacting legislation that encourages teachers to participate in certification, many states have increased the number of Board-certified teachers within their borders.
Vital state support has been steadily increasing through funds appropriated to subsidize a limited number of applicants' registration fees ($2,000 per person). For example, in Ohio, the State Department of Education has utilized NBPTS candidate subsidy funds to support 50 percent of the certification fee while drawing from state legislative appropriations to cover the remaining 50 percent. During the 1999/2000 school year, Ohio designated application funds for up to 600 applicants. Candidates are funded on a first-come, first-served basis with priority given to those who have attended an orientation session provided by local support efforts throughout the state. Similarly, the State of Ohio has signed legislation providing an annual reward of $2,500 to individuals achieving National Board Certification for the 10-year life of the certificate.

Additional support has been granted by Ohio's Office of Teacher Education and Certification. The department has declared that certified teachers will receive an appropriate number of equivalent education credits necessary to satisfy state licensure renewal requirements for ongoing professional development.

Outside of Ohio, a large number of states have received recognition for their innovative support of National Board Teachers. For example, in Arkansas, legislation provides three release days for teachers attempting National Board Certification. California adopted Assembly Bill 858 to permit licensed National Board teachers from other states to obtain a California teaching license without attending the state’s teacher preparation program. In Florida, through the Excellent Teaching Program Act, teachers receive a 10 percent salary increase for the life of their certificate as well as a 10 percent bonus if they choose to mentor newly hired teachers or National Board candidates. In addition, Florida legislation provides school districts that utilize National Board Certified
teachers as mentors with a bonus equal to 50 percent of the supplemental award provided to the mentor. Perhaps the most recognized for its early support of National Board candidates, North Carolina, passed the Excellent Schools Act in which teachers receive funds to pay for application, a 12 percent annual salary increase, and three days of release time.

**Positive Aspects**

An ample body of research exploring the educational ramifications and impact of NBPTS Certification has been generated in recent years. Researchers have taken many approaches to studying both the experiences of the certification process and the impact it has had on teachers and the broader school community. However, tempering the many positive outcomes that have been documented to date is a variety of legitimate and serious concerns.

**A Reflective Experience.** According to most participants, the experience of certification is a process of professional challenge and personal enlightenment (Lewis, 1994). In relating their experiences, candidates generally agreed that one of the greatest educational benefits derived was an increased ability to maintain a reflective attitude towards understanding student learning (Buday & Kelly, 1996; Kowalski, 1997; Rotberg et al., 1998; Tracz et al., 1993; Wise, 1994). Candidates were also in consensus that the most significant growth occurred in their ability to interpret student learning (Kowalski, 1997).

**An Affirming Experience.** In the portfolio section of the assessment, practitioners are required to reflect on their lessons in a descriptive and analytical manner
(Cascio, 1995). They are often surprised at their own competence in articulating the implicit assumptions undergirding their educational philosophy and practice (Tracz et al., 1995). As the educators collect artifacts documenting their knowledge and abilities, many reaffirm their educational philosophies (Tracz et al., 1995). Still others find that by responding to portfolio assessments in writing, both thinking and learning are clarified and enhanced (Wilcox, 1996).

**A Collaborative Experience.** The influx of National Board Certification candidates in schools has created a growing interest in collaboration between National Board teachers and other educators (Cascio, 1995; Rotberg et al., 1998). Isolated by tight class schedules, inadequate planning time, and extra duties, teachers often find little time remaining for collaboration with peers. Many NBPTS teachers, however, report breaking this mold by seeking feedback from peers on their effectiveness in the classroom (Buday & Kelly, 1996).

Candidates report receiving feedback by adopting a school partner who accompanies them through the certification process, or by asking a trusted friend to critique lessons. Increasingly, candidates have the option to join a support group that meets periodically to provide empathy and assistance in completing certification requirements.

**An Empowering Experience.** While a number of candidates admit to fearing the critique of fellow teachers, they are quick to acknowledge the positive outcomes that such collaboration brings to their own teaching practice (Kowalski, 1997). Collaboration has resulted in feelings of affirmation and empowerment as teachers share their ideas for best practice with one another (Maeroff, 1988).
Negative Aspects

While many organizations, leaders and educators have applauded the establishment of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, not all that has been written and said about the NBPTS has been of a positive nature.

Recruitment Hurdles. Critics of the NBPTS have called into question the Board’s plan for large-scale implementation in the face of logistical hurdles. Barriers such as low participation and success rates have posed problems in extending the support structure needed for National Board Certification to be entirely successful (Rotberg et al., 1998). Additional limitations appear to include a general lack of awareness, incentive, support, consistency, and research demonstrating the impact of certification (Rotberg et al., 1998). For example, some have complained that the cost of providing incentives for candidates to apply for certification is too high (Wright, 1990).

Competition. In cases where a percentage of candidates participate in a support group and fail, members may be concerned about confidentiality. Others complain that group collegial spirit is often violated in such instances (Chittenden & Jones, 1997; Wright, 1990).

Disagreement over Standards. Some have asserted that the Board has misguided focused reform efforts on improving teacher knowledge and skill rather than student learning (Schalock et al., 1998). While participants are required to show the academic progress of a small number of students in their classroom, some critics assert that they are not required to show adequate evidence that students have actually learned (Spicer, 1997). Still others fear that the standards proposed by the Board are inconsistent
with the undergraduate training and classroom experiences acquired by applicants (Roach, 1992).

**Narrow View of Teacher Professionalism.** Of particular interest to me are charges that the NBPTS is inappropriately attempting to standardize the meaning of teacher professionalism (Josefsberg, 1993). Has the NBPTS developed a system of standards that is applicable in the lives of only a small number of professional educators? Or, has the NBPTS developed an appropriate system for recognizing accomplished teaching across a wide body of educators?

**Exclusivity of Written Discourse.** Other critics charge that while the NBPTS purports to recognize accomplished teachers, it may be assessing teacher achievement through an inappropriately exclusive medium – a written discourse. Written discourse, as defined by Beaufort (1997), is a social entity “within which a set of distinctive writing practices occur and beyond whose borders different writing practices occur” (p.518). It is guided by both intellectual and social conventions that include issues to be addressed, ways of reasoning, assumptions regarding the audience, and the social purposes for communicating (Herrington, 1985). In asking candidates to argue in writing that they have realized the NBPTS’s standards for teaching, the NBPTS may unwittingly be excluding a number of qualified educators who do not possess the same style of discourse required by the NBPTS assessors (Burroughs et al., 2000). Concern exists that unless the differences between local community and broader professional “discourse communities” (Swales, 1990) are articulated, educators’ ability to form a professional discourse community to accurately define teacher accomplishment may be in jeopardy.
Furthermore, researchers have uncovered that many National Board Candidates have experienced difficulties in interpreting the meanings of the core propositions established by the NBPTS. Again, due to the highly contextualized/localized professional discourse communities that exist among educators, many candidates have failed to achieve certification because of their inability to interpret properly the decontextualized core propositions, and sometimes standards, held by the NBPTS (Burroughs et al., 2000).

**Additional Concerns.** Many questions remain regarding whether the NBPTS truly possesses the ability to identify outstanding teachers (Roach, 1992). Are the NBPTS’s core propositions for accomplished teaching compatible with the professional beliefs and priorities of the teachers seeking this form of validation? Are the assessment modes and measures fair? Why are a large number of teachers, especially minorities, still not choosing to seek National Board Certification? The following study will seek to gain the opinions and perspectives of a small number of educators on the concerns presented above.

**Chapter 2 Summary**

This chapter has explored the widespread and enduring struggle of educators in the United States to gain increased societal respect. With the creation of the NBPTS in the late 1980s, a powerful organization has emerged that now seeks to enhance the status of educators through recognition and certification of accomplished teaching skills. The
following chapter will present the research methodology utilized to explore three
different groups of teachers’ perceptions of accomplished teaching and their alignment
with the NBPTS’s core propositions.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Rationale

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways that three distinct groups of teachers codified, prioritized, and validated their belief systems regarding their professional roles as educators. Findings were compared with core propositions established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, NBPTS, to examine any relevant similarities and differences with NBPTS's professional belief system.

The research methodology included individual guided interviews, focus group interviews, and a grounded survey. Triangulation of data tools enabled this researcher to: (1) provide a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the meanings that participants attached to their professional beliefs by utilizing Polkinghorne's (1995) narrative analysis technique; (2) employ the constant comparative method for data analysis in which theory is built as data emerges from a variety of sources to guide questions posed during the study; (3) document emerging understandings of teachers' role beliefs within and across groups through use of Polkinghorne's analysis of narratives (1995) technique; (4) compare participants' professional belief systems with core propositions established by
the NBPTS, and (5) explore the various ways in which individuals and groups of participants sought validation of their professional beliefs.

The Research Paradigm

For each person engaged in research, there are theoretical assumptions that guide the way in which the world is viewed and the accompanying manner in which this view is expressed and represented (Veith, 1994). These paradigmatic assumptions define for the researcher the nature of the world and his/her relationship with the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Because the researcher serves as the primary tool for acquiring information during qualitative research, it was necessary to maintain a keen degree of self-awareness and reflexivity regarding the researcher's interaction with participants (Kvale, 1996). This awareness enabled the researcher to be forthright with his/her assumptions guiding the design, conduct, and analysis of research. The interplay of researcher subjectivity with participants is considered to be a rich and vital strength of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). To better understand researcher subjectivity, it is critical that the researcher make these paradigmatic assumptions explicit in order to find a "place to stand" in the midst of competing worldviews (Sipe & Constable, 1996).

My personal epistemological and methodological beliefs regarding teaching and learning fit most aptly under the interpretivist paradigm, in which knowledge and understanding are interpreted through a process of meaning construction (Schwandt, 1994). These meanings are built through dialogue and social interaction. As an interpretivist, my theory building looked beyond the thin descriptions of participant
behavior to describe and probe the participants’ “intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances of action” (Denzin, 1988, p. 39). I understand that every human’s perspective is unique and often filled with multiple and conflicting meanings. I have sought to understand the lived experiences and core belief systems of my participants, from their own points of view (Schwandt, 1994).

**Qualitative Research**

For purposes of this study, I utilized qualitative research methods to explore teachers’ beliefs regarding their professional roles. I selected qualitative research methods because of the emphasis on context, descriptive data, process, induction, and meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The following provides a rationale for selecting qualitative methods.

First, qualitative researchers recognize that context has an influence on forming one’s identity and beliefs. Rather than ignoring participants’ previous experiences, qualitative researchers attempt to understand participants in light of their past (Geertz, 1973). Within the context of this study, I became familiar with each participant’s past relevant professional and personal experience in order to better understand their current professional perceptions and beliefs.

Second, qualitative researchers rely on gathering descriptive data rather than simply numbers to illustrate and warrant their findings (Patton, 1990). By utilizing interviews and grounded surveys to collect data, I have accessed a vast array of rich information regarding my participants’ beliefs and perspectives.
Third, qualitative researchers give great attention to the research process rather than simply the product. This enables the researcher to examine participant attitudes and perceptions more fully and to uncover information that might otherwise remain hidden through traditional means of research.

Fourth, the process of conducting qualitative research is primarily an inductive process. Because theory develops from the bottom up rather than from the top down, the researcher is not limited to proving or disproving a hypothesis. Instead, the researcher is seen as "constructing a picture that takes shape as (he/she) collects and examines the parts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p.6).

Finally, qualitative researchers focus on the meaning that participants make from life. They explore the assumptions and implicit theories by which people operate (Erickson, 1986). The results provide rich data complete with insights that might never be accessed through the use of quantitative methods.

**Participants and Setting**

As an interviewer, I collected data from three groups of educators: successful/unsuccessful National Board Candidates as well as teachers who had not chosen to seek National Board certification. Each of these groups contained five participants. All were K-12 educators currently practicing within the Central Ohio region. The sample size was selected to be sufficient and manageable in allowing me to answer my research questions while simultaneously building depth of understanding (Kvale, 1996).
Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, in which the goal was to study *information-rich cases* in depth (Patton, 1990). I utilized *maximum variation sampling* which “aims at capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation” (Patton, 1990, p. 172). Upon identifying the diverse characteristics and criteria particular to each of the three sample groups (such as involvement with the NBPTS, participants’ sex, race, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, school location, etc.), I chose participants who maximized the variation within each of the three sample groups. The heterogeneity across individual and group cases helped to elucidate the emergence of common patterns for “capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts” (Patton, 1990, p.172) of teachers’ beliefs regarding their professional roles. Similarly, sampling individuals in each group who were considered by peers to have particularly different experiences/ backgrounds related to their professional experience enabled me to more thoroughly describe the variation within and across groups while also exploring similar elements of belief systems (Seidman, 1991).

Rather than attempting to generalize findings to all similar groups of teachers, this sample was limited to informing educators with significant common patterns and variations (Patton, 1990).

**Procedures**

Data was collected using guided interviews (Lofland, 1971) focus group interviewing, and grounded survey. I maintained an *analytic journal* to record observational, theoretical, and methodological notes following interaction with each
participant. The analytic journal was helpful in looking for commonalities and distinctions within and across participant. In addition, I maintained an emphasis on reflexive thought during the research process to monitor biases that I had toward participant beliefs and theories of teacher beliefs (Carney, 1990). The use of both the analytic journal and reflexive thought lent itself nicely to the constant comparative method of analysis that I employed during the study as I sought to interpret the data patterns that emerged through the use of the following research design tools.

**The Guided Interview**

The purpose of interviewing is to reveal the thoughts of another. Because inner thoughts, beliefs, and intentions of participants cannot be readily observed, interviews were used to access the implicit understandings of participants’ teacher role beliefs. In order to uncover the world as another person views it and to understand the meaning that others attach to their world, interviews with in-depth discussion were utilized (Lofland, 1971; Spradley, 1979). Qualitative interviews, when properly conducted, provide a lens into the participant’s world of meaning. Described as “conversation with a purpose” (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p. 149), this type of research assumes that “the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). As with all qualitative research, the quality of the information is largely dependent upon the skill of the researcher as the primary inquiry tool (Kvale, 1996).

The general interview guide approach (Patton, 1990) required the researcher to outline a set of issues to be explored prior to interviewing. The interview guide provided subject areas or topics from which the researcher was free to “explore, probe, and ask
questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 1990, p. 283). The actual wording of interview questions was flexible and emergent depending upon the context in which the question arose. Due to the flexibility of this interview technique, questions were not necessarily explored in one particular order. In essence, the interview guide became a checklist of common information that had to be obtained from each participant. As with all research, the interviewer had to assure participants that their cooperation in sharing their story was appreciated and valued by demonstrating an attentive demeanor (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The general interview guide had many strengths. First, this approach enabled the researcher to collect a core body of knowledge from each participant. Later, this was helpful for making comparisons across a number of people. Second, this approach permitted the interviewee to build a “friendly conversation” (Spradley, 1979) within a particular subject area of the participant’s interest. This was helpful in gaining an “insider’s perspective” into the categories and meanings deemed important by participants. Third, the tone of the interview may be perceived as being more natural to the interviewee because the researcher was free to follow the flow of relevant interest demonstrated by the participant (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Finally, interviews were an efficient tool for collecting large amounts of data within a limited time span (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

There were, however, limitations to this approach. Because interviews involved personal interaction, they relied heavily on the cooperation of the participant. When interviewees were unaware of recurring patterns in their own life, it made it difficult to explore the agenda established by the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In
addition, the interviewer was often tempted to follow or initiate discussion regarding topics outside of the scope of the interview guide. Only in cases where the participant initiated discussion of another topic in direct response to a guided question did the researcher pursue this line of discussion. The researcher was sensitive to participant responses that appeared to go in new directions. These seemingly divergent responses held important insight into the participant's understandings of their world.

Effective interviewing relies heavily on the skill of the interviewer. Interviewers should ask questions that evoke long narratives from participants rather than short answers (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Interviewers should carefully select their questions to elicit rich responses according to the following criteria by Kvale (1996, p. 145):

- The extent of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee.
- The shorter the interviewer's questions and the longer the subjects' answers, the better.
- The degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers.
- The ideal interview is to a large extent interpreted throughout the interview.
- The interviewer attempts to verify his or her interpretations of the subject's answers in the course of the interview.
- The interview is "self-communicating"—it is a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra description and explanations.
The interview schedule that I designed for participants aligns with the criteria listed above. In addition, according to Seidman (1991), researchers should carefully study a number of additional skills and techniques for conducting quality interviews (see Appendix H).

By reviewing these criteria before and after each interview, I maintained a reflective attitude toward not only my topic of research but also the methods that I employed to collect such research.

The content of the research questions was also carefully considered. According to Patton (1990), the researcher makes a number of crucial decisions in planning for the content of the guided interview. There are basically six different types of questions that may be posed on any one topic.

First, the researcher may pose experience/behavior questions. These questions explore what a person does or has done and seek description of participants' behavior, action, and activities.

Second, the interviewer may pose opinion/value questions. These are questions aimed at understanding the mental and interpretive processes of individuals. These explore participants' “intentions, desires, and values (Patton, 1990, p. 291).

Third, the researcher may pose feeling questions. These questions explore the emotional responses of people to thoughts and experiences. The interviewer must be careful to distinguish between opinions and feelings in interviewee responses. In order to understand what someone is feeling, the question should explicitly ask about feelings.
Fourth, *knowledge questions* are used to find out factual bodies of knowledge possessed by the participant. The main objective with these questions is to determine what body of knowledge the interviewee considers factual.

Fifth, *sensory questions* may be posed regarding what is empirically known by the participant. These ask interviewees to describe stimuli to which they are commonly exposed in their particular situation.

Finally, *background/demographic questions* identify the characteristics of the person being interviewed. Answers to these questions help to locate the participant in relation to other people through comparisons of age, education, occupation, etc.

In determining the sample of questions to be included in both the individual and group interviews, I consulted this list of recommendations. It was important to include a wide variety of questions to help uncover participants' understandings. When researchers meet these criteria, it is likely that thorough and quality interviewing will be conducted.

**The Focus Group Interview**

I utilized focus group research as a data collection tool in order to elucidate similar and distinct patterns of teacher role beliefs across three groups of educators and the NBPTS. According to Krueger (1994), focus group interviews should be considered when:

There is a communication or understanding gap between groups or categories of people. This gap has a tendency to occur between groups who have power and others who do not. Professional groups (medical, educational, scientific, technical, business, legal) are facing a crisis due to communication gaps caused
by language and logic. Professionals have developed unique ways of thinking that are substantially different from the very people they are trying to reach (p. 43).

I utilized focus group research to illuminate any gaps in communication that existed within and across educator groups as well as between educators and the NBPTS.

Originally associated with market research, the group interview has recently become more popular among social scientists in providing yet another level of data collection that is ordinarily not available through individual interviewing. As Morgan (1988) asserts, “The hallmark of the focus group is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group” (p. 12). In focus group interviewing, the researcher assembles a series of groups of people that possess similar backgrounds with certain “control characteristics” (Knodel, 1993, p. 39). Participants, however, should not have close relationships with one another as this may inhibit group discourse (Morgan, 1988).

During this study, I met once (Merton, 1987) with each group of educators (five teachers who attempted but did not receive National Board Certification, five teachers who received National Board Certification, as well as five teachers who did not to choose to seek National Board Certification) over a period of a month. Each group interview lasted approximately two and a half hours (Morgan, Krueger & Richard, 1993). The size of each group was selected according to two criteria (Krueger, 1994): to provide an intimate and inviting atmosphere yet be large enough to support the availability of diverse perspectives. By interviewing five participants in each focus group, known as a mini-focus group (Krueger, 1994, p. 17), the above criteria were met.

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The role of the focus group moderator involved skills similar to those needed by the researcher conducting individual interviewer (Oppenheim, 1992). As the researcher, I prepared open-ended questions through considerable reflection on the topic and careful analysis of previous data collected from a pilot study. The interview guide was prepared in an order that seemed natural and logical to the participants (Glesne, 1999).

My role as moderator was to create a permissive environment for group sharing. I did this by nurturing different perceptions and points of view both at the beginning and throughout the interview. Participants were encouraged to share their own perceptions, feelings and ways of thinking rather than to build a consensus (Morgan, 1988). I encouraged participants to share alternative explanations that included both positive and negative comments.

Additionally, I prevented any person or persons from dominating the discussion of the group. I sought to engage all participants in conversation, even those who were reluctant to speak. As the interviewer, I had to be careful to portray “understanding empathy” and “disciplined detachment” as I refrained from putting words into participants’ mouths (Bellenger et al., 1976).

During group sharing, just as during all other forms of data collection, I utilized analytic induction to derive ongoing understanding of the ways in which my participants conceptualized their profession (Krueger, 1994). Directly after the meeting, I took notes regarding emerging themes and patterns related to participants’ professional beliefs and continued to look for any other data that did not fit previous patterns.

Finally, I struck a balance between the dual role of moderator and interview director. “The group interviewer must simultaneously worry about the script of questions
and be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction” (Frey & Fontana, 1994, p. 365).

As moderator, I prepared an interview guide for each meeting. While the interview guide provided a sequence of core questions for each group, I had to remain sensitive to the unique and emergent direction that each discussion followed (Wells, 1974). Throughout the interview, dichotomous questions were considered inappropriate for promoting discussion and were avoided (Krueger, 1994). The types of questions explored during each focus group interview stemmed from five different purposes (Krueger, 1994). These involved questions that were opening, introductory, transitional, key, and ending questions.

Opening questions were round-robin questions that each participant answered at the beginning of the study. Typically, during this time, participants identified characteristics that they had in common. Introductory questions introduced the topic of discussion and provided interviewees with the opportunity to share past experiences connected with the overall topic. These questions were used to foster conversation between participants.

Transition questions were then posed to aid participants in viewing the topic in terms of its bigger picture. During this time, participants were tuning into how others viewed the topic.

Key questions were then asked. These were the questions that drove the study. This part of the discussion provided critical data for analysis.
Finally, ending questions allowed participants to reflect back on previous comments and to state their final position on the topic. This also became key information for analysis.

There were many advantages to utilizing focus groups. It is acknowledged that group members had significant influence on one another by sharing various beliefs and perceptions (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988). This was seen as a strength over the individual interview because focus group interactions promoted a natural real-to-life environment with participants influencing and being influenced by others (Andreason, 1983; Bellenger et al., 1976; Morgan, 1988). In allowing participants to interact primarily with one another rather than the interviewer, emphasis more easily shifted from the researcher’s to the participants’ point of view (Morgan, 1988). In addition, the results of the group interview provided a complex view representative of a broader number of people in providing results that were “polyphonic” (Frey & Fontana, 1993, p.26). Other advantages of focus group interviewing included rich data collection, flexibility in design, participant reciprocation, and comprehensive yet inexpensive data collection (Morgan, 1988).

Disadvantages of focus group interviewing included the potential for the emerging group culture to interfere with individual expression (Janis, 1982). Likewise, if an individual was permitted to dominate the discussion of the group, it became more difficult to explore sensitive topics. Other difficulties related to focus group interviewing arose during data analysis. When attempting to transcribe multi-voiced conversation from audiotapes, it was difficult to isolate and label the participant or participants who were speaking. To address this difficulty, I used a note taker to track participants’
speech (Bertrand, Brown, & Ward, 1992). Finally, the interviewer had to be well-trained in asking open-ended questions, utilizing pauses and probes, and being sensitive to the timing for asking new questions (Krueger, 1994). Prior to conducting my focus group interviews, I reviewed and rehearsed the guidelines presented for facilitation.

As with all qualitative research, political and ethical issues needed to be considered when conducting focus groups (Punch, 1986). For example, privacy issues required special consideration when audio tape was used during the group interview. My participants were assured that their data would be held in strict confidence. Additional concern arose from the fact that the information that participants shared with the researcher was also being shared with fellow participants. For this reason, the interviewer refrained from asking questions that participants would likely feel uncomfortable discussing in public (Morgan, 1988).

The overall purpose of using focus group interviews in this inquiry was to explore the patterns of dialogue that surfaced regarding teachers' role beliefs during group interaction. The results provided a valuable method for data triangulation (Denzin, 1989b) for understanding the beliefs of individual participants, as well as those beliefs within and across groups of participants (Knodel, 1993).

The Grounded Survey

A grounded survey was administered to explore the sample population's attitudes and values surrounding their professional beliefs (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; McCracken, 1988). The survey included a small number of open-ended questions that examined participants' emerging belief systems regarding their professional role as a
teacher (McCracken, 1988). This tool was administered to participants during the month following the focus group interview.

Research questions were developed after initial data analysis of information gained during the individual and group interviews (Desvousges & Frey, 1989; Fuller et al., 1993). The decision to create this instrumentation after the individual and group interviews was based on published models of interpretivist research. For example, Kvale (1988) asserts that new relationships and patterns of understanding commonly emerge for participants during the interview process. Therefore, the researcher must allow room for participants to describe their lived experiences and beliefs by designing flexible tools for data collection that permit these understandings to emerge as the study progresses (Kvale, 1988). Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994a) present a rationale encouraging researchers to be flexible in their instrumentation design. They hold that predesigned and structured instruments may blind the researcher and cause him/her to overlook or misrepresent participants' understandings. Miles and Huberman further maintain that by imposing a rigidly designed instrument on an interpretivist study, the researcher will have little access to the emerging context by which "qualitative research lives and breathes" (p. 35).

The questions included in the grounded survey explored similar types of issues related to those included in the individual and group interviews. The questions were developed from the patterns of attitudes and values that emerged from the previous two interviews. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed the researcher to access the specific set of emerging concerns held by individual participants as well as those beliefs held across participant groups. Therefore, the language and content in the grounded
survey represented familiar and pertinent language to the participants (Fetterman, 1989; Morgan, 1988).

Finally, the researcher compared grounded survey responses taken at the end of the study with initial themes and patterns of professional beliefs gained during individual and group interviews at the beginning of the study.

It must be noted, however, that grounded surveys were not without limitations. Miles and Huberman (1994a) warn that the researcher is exposed to the risk of gathering superfluous data if the research tool is not appropriately focused. Similarly, it becomes more difficult in multiple-case studies to analyze data when findings are not as readily comparable as in single-case studies. Other criticisms include the high risk for misinterpretation of data if the researcher fails to member-check survey responses (Fetterman, 1989; Morgan, 1988). For these reasons, participant follow-up was necessary.

In addition, grounded surveys have been shown to place a distance between the questioner and respondent (Fowler, 1988). For this reason, the grounded survey was used as a final method for data collection only after a relationship had been developed between the interviewer and participants. Grounded surveys rely completely on the honesty and accuracy of participants' responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). It is hoped that by making my participants comfortable with the process of dialoguing face-to-face about their beliefs, that honest results were shared later in their writing. I included a sentence addressing this issue in my grounded survey, asking participants to "Please be as thoughtful and honest with your answers as possible.”
In conclusion, the researcher played a critical role in obtaining accurate results from all data collection tools by following through with appropriate data analysis. According to Morgan (1988), “it is important to avoid survey-like interpretations of (qualitative) data, given the small size and nonrepresentativeness of the sample” (p. 63). For this reason, data was analyzed according to traditionally accepted criteria of credibility and trustworthiness.

**Pilot Study**

During a qualitative research study, initial questions may be altered or eliminated based on the response of participants. Questions that are ambiguous or inappropriate may be filtered out through the use of a pilot study. Pilot studies permit the researcher to access more fully the concrete experiences of participants. Consequently, pilot studies benefit the investigation with their ability to “yield greater conceptual strength as well as improvements in logistic efficiency” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987, p. 91).

During the Winter and Spring 1999 quarters, I was involved in two Ohio State courses exploring methodology and analysis techniques commonly employed in qualitative research. As part of the course requirements, I chose to pilot a study that sought to understand the professional role beliefs of a variety of National Board Candidates currently teaching in a large urban school district. As part of this study, I acted as a participant-observer in a National Board preparation course offered through the district’s partnership with The Ohio State University. I conducted three in-depth interviews with the course teacher and made regular observations of her teaching. Similarly, I interviewed a number of the district’s successful National Board candidates,
two unsuccessful candidates, a principal who had worked with candidates, and several of the district’s candidate facilitators.

As a result of my participation in the pilot study, I generated approximately 400 pages of transcription from both observations and interviews. These transcripts were the basis of nearly all of my questions for individual and focus group interviews as well as the grounded survey.

In order to make certain that the actual questions that I included in this study were appropriate, I once again piloted the questions with teachers from a variety of professional backgrounds representative of my sample population. By testing the questions before including them in my official dissertation study, I made certain that the wording and intent of the questions were valid.

Length of Time for Collecting Data

Pilot study work began during January of 1999 and continued through October 1999. Data collection for this doctoral study lasted approximately 20 weeks between the months of December 1999 and April 2000. Data analysis and writing continued through July of 2000. The study was organized into five phases.

Beginning with approval of the proposal in December of 1999, I contacted participants and establish meeting times for individual guided interviews. These interviews were conducted toward the end of December and throughout January. After transcription, preliminary analysis, and member checking of any ambiguous data, I conducted Phase II during February.
During February, focus group interviews were conducted for each of the three groups. Each interview was transcribed according to audio recordings as well as fieldnotes. Member checks were completed as needed during this time.

The next phase began in March. During this time the grounded survey was administered. Participants were mailed a grounded survey to be completed by the middle of March.

In the latter part of March, I began to write narrative analyses and analysis of narratives. Final member checks were utilized to ensure the credibility of the findings.

The next phase involved the writing of Chapter 6: Discussion in May. The final phase of editing and formatting the dissertation soon followed in June 2000 and lasted into July of 2000.

Data Analysis

Rationale

Throughout the study, the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) was utilized to simultaneously collect and analyze data. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe this version of analytic induction as one in which the “analysis and data collection occur in a pulsating fashion” (p.66). Data collection yielded two distinct bodies of findings: (1) high-quality description, and (2) shared patterns and distinctions within and across cases.

The approach used to analyze data from this study stems from Bruner’s (1985) concept of narrative inquiry. Bruner argued that rather than view narrative knowledge as mere emotive communication, it should be valued as a legitimate form of rational
thought. Bruner uncovered two distinct forms in which participants may share the ways
in which they process knowledge. First, he recognized *paradigmatic cognition*, in which
knowledge is organized into particular concepts or categories. Second, he recognized
*narrative cognition*, in which knowledge is used to comprehend human action.

Contrary to traditional qualitative research techniques that place sole emphasis on
gathering paradigmatic types of information from participants, Bruner promoted the
value of also gathering narrative forms of data. He believed that there were dual
approaches to understanding the world. In essence, he contrasted the paradigmatic and
logical way of organizing information with the narrative or storied way of understanding
belief systems. Polkinghorne elaborates, “Paradigmatic knowledge is focused on what is
*common* among actions… Narrative knowledge focuses on the particular and the special
characteristics of *each action*” (1995, p. 11). Likewise, Carter (1993) writes that
narrative reasoning “captures in a special fashion the richness and the nuances of
meaning in human affairs” (p. 6).

Polkinghorne supports Bruner’s position that the researcher should utilize both
paradigmatic and narrative forms of inquiry to gain a fuller understanding of participants’
belief systems. He reflects, “Stories express a kind of knowledge that uniquely describes
human experience in which actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively
to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes” (1995, p. 8). As a result, Polkinghorne
developed an analysis technique known as *narrative analysis*, in which “the researcher’s
(first) task is to configure the data elements into a story that unites and gives meaning to
the data as contributors to a goal or a purpose” (p. 15). This goal or purpose is also
known as a plot, around which each participant’s narrative analysis story is written. The
researcher reports findings in the form of an emplotted narrative. In so doing, the narrative centers around a plot that links key data elements in the story with a satisfying denouement. Throughout narrative analysis, emphasis is placed on viewing the participant’s story as a whole, as well as considering the participant’s unique aspects.

During the second phase of data analysis, known as analysis of narratives, the researcher engages in a traditional approach to qualitative data analysis. Throughout this stage, paradigmatic categories of similarity and difference are uncovered within and across cases. During analysis of narratives, particular instances of data are compared within and across cases to warrant a meaningful and interesting synthesis of findings.

Reflecting back, the constant comparative method was used to guide both narrative analysis and analysis of narratives stages of the inquiry.

**Analysis Methods**

A number of analysis techniques were used with the data. These included utilizing the constant comparative method, narrative analysis technique, and analysis of narratives approach to understanding findings.

**Constant Comparative Method.** Through the use of the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), I monitored emerging patterns of similarities and differences both within and across the three participant groups. The use of the constant comparative method began during the data collection phase and continued into the phases in which data collection was completed and analysis traditionally occurs. According to Glaser (1978), the steps in the constant comparative method are as follows:
1. Begin data collection.

2. Identify key issues, patterns.

3. Collect data that provides a large number of incidents related to the focus, with attention to diverse dimensions related to the theme.

4. Begin writing about categories under exploration by describing each incident. Continue searching for new incidents.

5. Examine the emerging data to discover broad social relationships.

6. Begin to sample, code, and write as analysis focuses on the core emerging categories.

Types of data collected for this study:

1. Audiotapes and field notes taken during individual guided interviews with each participant.

2. Audiotapes and field notes taken during focus group interviews of each group.

3. Grounded surveys completed by email.

**Narrative Analysis.** According to Polkinghorne (1995), the first step in data analysis is to develop a case or emplotted narrative for each participant. This data is presented as 15 distinct cases in which each participant shares how he/she developed his/her particular belief systems related to his/her profession. The particular style of narrative analysis employed in this study represents an interpretive exploration of Polkinghorne's technique. In contrast to the more traditional, action-driven plots employed in classical literature, the plots of these narratives primarily surround the characters' beliefs rather than their actions. Polkinghorne states, "Plot is the narrative structure through which people understand and describe the relationship among the
events and choices of their lives” (p. 7). Mishler (1986b) agrees that people often understand and recapitulate their experiences in storied form. He feels that it becomes the interviewer's responsibility to facilitate natural responses from the interviewee in the form of stories.

In this particular study, the researcher's goal was to portray the data in a manner that united each participant's professional story and brought meaning to the data collected. Rather than sorting participants’ data into similarities and differences as an initial analysis strategy, the researcher first constructed a coherent individual account of each participant’s professional belief system. The end product of the narrative analysis was intended to “integrate the data elements into a coherent developmental account” (Stake, 1988, p. 255). Polkinghorne teaches that effective narrative inquiry enables the reader to “draw upon previous understanding while being open to the specific and unique elements that make the new episode different from all that have gone before” (1985, p. 11). The final story “must fit the data while at the same time bringing an order and meaningfulness that is not apparent in the data themselves” (White, 1975, p. 16).

To produce a quality narrative analysis, all data collected were not necessarily utilized to convey participants' stories. It was necessary to reduce irrelevant data as part of the analysis. Admittedly, data reduction was a subjective process that leaned heavily on procedures for maintaining the credibility of each case. Below are the guidelines that Polkinghorne (pp. 16-18) adopted from Dollard (1935) to guide the development of the narrative analysis:

1. Describe cultural context in which the storied case takes place.
2. Attend to the embodied nature of the protagonist.
3. Be considerate of both the general cultural environment but also the significance of other people affecting the actions and goals of the participant.

4. Concentrate on the choices and actions of the participant.

5. Consider the historical continuity of the characters.

6. Mark the beginning and ending point of the story.

7. Ensure accuracy by making certain that researched occurrences are plausible and clearly communicated.

The following represented the steps involved in developing each emplotted narrative:

1. Inform reader of the outcome of story.

2. Present data chronologically.

3. Signify which data contribute to identified outcomes.

4. Develop an outline of the plot.

5. Fill in the outline with details taken from data.

6. Adjust outline to compliment data.

7. Collect additional data where needed.

With full consideration of the criteria for writing narrative analyses listed above, I constructed fifteen emplotted narratives. The writing of each narrative required the researcher's full immersion into both individual and group interview transcripts as well as grounded surveys. After reading through each participant's data corpus, I selected various key themes and events that were most relevant to each participant's belief system. Next, I selected a title that represented an overview of their belief systems. This title served as the guiding denouement toward which each story was written. I triangulated
among all data sources and utilized as much of the participants’ actual words as possible to tell each person’s story. Upon completion, each narrative was shared with its owner to ensure credibility. Member checks were completed via email and telephone. Revisions were made accordingly.

**Analysis of Narratives.** Analysis of narratives was the second form of narrative inquiry employed in this study. Analysis of narratives, according to Bruner (1985), employs paradigmatic reasoning in analysis. By analyzing themes that hold across stories, analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements within and across participants. Rather than simply imposing previous theoretical concepts on the data, inductive analysis is utilized to recursively move between previous concepts and emerging data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This notion of grounded theory allows concepts to be altered until they most closely match the actual data. Paradigmatic analysis utilizes grounded theory and the constant comparison method to permit the researcher to accurately label the dominant categories within and across participant groups. According to Polkinghorne, “The strength of paradigmatic procedures is their capacity to develop general knowledge about a collection of stories” (1995, p. 15). However, he warns, “This kind of knowledge is abstract and formal and by necessity underplays the unique and particular aspects of each story” (195, p. 15).

Analysis of narratives proceeded in the study in the following manner. First, through use of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), codes and categories that represented over-arching themes were developed from participants’ stories after reading through each interview and survey. The researcher prepared individual charts to represent each participant’s emerging categories. These charts provided a
triangulated view of data across all three data sources. Upon completion of the charts, categories were organized into major and sub-categories. Data that was neither triangulated within each participant’s story nor across participant cases was reduced or omitted. What remained was an overall coding scheme that represented each participant’s belief systems. Next, participant categories were compared within and across groups. Charts were developed to display similarities and differences within and across these groups. From these charts, each analysis of narratives section was written.

At the completion of writing the analysis of narratives section, it was clear that participants’ stories had been translated into segmented data. The concepts were presented in this form to aid in understanding the fullness of teacher belief systems across these particular educators.

Establishing Credibility

While paradigmatic thought has traditionally been valued as the exclusive mode for assuring trustworthy and valid knowledge, this study joined other scholars (Bruner, 1985; Gardner, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1988) in promoting both paradigmatic and narrative cognition as a valid way for understanding belief systems.

Member Check

In narrative inquiry, both “the accuracy of the data and the plausibility of the plot” are valued (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 20). In this study, the researcher verified with participants that reported events occurred as transcribed. Likewise, the researcher made certain to member-check interpretations of findings with participants by asking them to
read and verify both their transcripts and narrative report (Miles & Huberman, 1994b). Participants responses to member checks are presented in Chapter 6.

**Triangulation**

According to Sass (1992), the researcher’s story should be both useful and accurate to the actual historical happenings. Triangulation of data sources across individual and group interviews helped to heighten credibility of the study. This technique, involving the comparison of transcripts from individual/group interviews and grounded surveys, produced confidence that events actually took place as transcribed and reported. The ongoing triangulation process also helped to inform the researcher of emerging issues that were relevant to cover in participant discussions.

**Analytic Notes**

As a tool to ensure credibility and to aid in the creation of both narrative analyses and analyses of narratives, I periodically maintained journal notes that were descriptive, analytic, and reflexive (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Descriptive and analytic notes were kept on my computer in which I recorded observational, theoretical, and methodological information shared by participants (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987). These notes tracked emerging analytic codes and categories developing from data as themes, patterns, and distinctions.

Observational notes of participants’ appearance, body language, and the interview setting were recorded after each interview to provide a broader contextual background for later analysis of interview data. If possible, interviews were performed in participants’
classroom settings to provide contextual details that appeared to influence or be
influenced by the participants’ belief system (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Theoretical notes regarding participants’ belief systems were periodically
recorded before or after transcribing interviews. These notes were later compared with
individual and group interview findings as well as grounded survey data. The results
helped the researcher to see more easily the emergence of categories of beliefs within and
across participants.

Methodological notes were recorded after unusual interviews and included the
researcher’s own reflections regarding the manner in which the interview was conducted.
This section of notes provided insight into ways in which I might become a more
effective researcher.

Reflexive Thought

Finally, to insure credibility, I periodically used a tape recorder and a journal to
record self-reflective comments to track my own “feelings, problems, ideas, hunches,
impressions, and prejudices” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 123) toward both participants
and the subject of study. This data helped to deepen my own understanding of
researcher interaction and influence on the study (Karp, 1996).

Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter 3 has explored the research design utilized to uncover three different
groups of educators’ professional belief systems. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will
present the findings that were gathered and compiled into 15 separate narrative analyses through the use of individual interviews, focus groups, and grounded surveys.
CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Overview

Chapter 4 presents 15 case studies developed through Polkinghorne’s (1995) narrative analysis methods. Previously in Chapter 3, Polkinghorne’s approach to narrative analysis is described in detail.

The case studies represent five participants from each of the following three groups: 1) Teachers who have sought National Board Certification and have not received certification (NBPTS Candidates); 2) Teachers who been certified by the NBPTS (NBPTS Certified); and 3) Teachers who have not chosen to seek National Board Certification (Regular Teacher). Participants were selected from a variety of rural, suburban, and urban school districts in or near central Ohio. Pseudonyms for participant and school names have been utilized to preserve their anonymity. Table 4.1 provides an overview of key characteristics taken into consideration in selecting the wide range of educators involved in this study.
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Table 4.1: Overview of Participant Characteristics

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Each of these narrative analyses was conducted as the first phase of analysis handling interview data. Samples of transcripts generated by both individual and group interviews, as well as the grounded survey, are provided in Appendices C, F, and G. With few exceptions, each participant’s case study was generated by comparing the three sources of data listed above.

In this study, each narrative analysis was purposefully written in a sequential format to articulate the 15 participants’ individual and common professional beliefs, attitudes and values. Each narrative follows and addresses the study’s prescribed research questions deliberately and systematically. Rokeach’s (1968) belief-system lens for viewing data fit naturally with the task of writing an emplotted narrative for each participant. The lens permitted the researcher to sequentially: (1) set background by sharing participants’ beliefs/predispositions toward becoming an educator; (2) build a plot to share participant’s most poignant attitudes of joy and frustration surrounding professional issues [including validation and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards]; (3) explore participants’ values/actions taken as an outcome of attitudes held toward the profession, and (4) provide closure to each narrative by presenting participants’ perspectives for further promoting the professionalization of teaching.

The contents of Chapter 4 will present the narrative analyses of the three participant groups. According to Polkinghorne (1995), it is important for the reader to keep in mind “A narrative configuration is not merely a transcription of the thoughts and

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1 Exceptions included: Tess was unable to participate in focus group discussions. Ken was unable to complete his grounded survey.
actions of the protagonist; it is a means of making sense and showing the significance of them in the context of a denouement” (p. 19).

**Teachers Who Did Not Receive National Board Certification**

Although many teachers across the United States have attempted to receive National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification over the past five years, the NBPTS reports that only approximately 44 percent of all applicants succeeded in passing requirements to become certified (Harman, 1999).

The following five participants who did not receive National Board Certification agreed to share their professional belief systems as well as their experiences with National Board certification.

**Ken: "We Need to Take Control of Our Own Profession!"**

Ken currently teaches fourth grade in a large urban school district in the mid-western United States. Having taught for 21 years, Ken knows he made the right decision to become a teacher. From the time he was very young, Ken recalls the major impact key educators played in his life. “They loved *me* as an individual. I was the quiet child...I was shy.” He shares one particular incident in which he credits his teacher for changing his life:

I was told to be the lead in the play. I had so little confidence. The week before the play I still didn’t know my lines. The teacher decided he wasn’t going to use the understudy. “You’re going to be in it. If you get on stage and you don’t know
the lines, that’s going to make you look really foolish.” I thought, “If he has that much confidence in me, maybe I need to have confidence in me.” So I did!

As a result of this memorable experience, Ken places his greatest emphasis on building up his fourth-grade students’ self-esteem “so that they can begin the process of learning.” To accomplish this goal, Ken prides himself on creating an atmosphere of teamwork. “I tell the kids, ‘Who’s a 42-year-old fourth-grader in here?’ They point to me. I say, ‘Well, who’s the youngest teacher in here?’ They know it’s them.” He explains, “They don’t mind helping each other.” To achieve such teamwork, Ken has set high behavioral expectations for his students. “I can go to the restroom and they can stand in the hall by themselves -- with no problems -- they’re standing quietly.” He continues, “I do run a tight ship. They get the message. It impresses a lot of people, but to me it’s just what I expect.”

When it comes to academics, Ken is adamant, “I’m not like every other teacher that you may have met. I have very strong methods. I push kids and I expect a lot.” He insists, “We don’t play school. This is real!” His teaching methods include “doing instead of just being talked to.” He continues, “In order to get [to] every child and teach their learning style, you’ve got to do a variety of things.” Ken places a high value on interaction between himself and his students.

When discussing the school environment in which he works, it is readily apparent that Ken is very comfortable with his fellow teachers and principal. “The staff is very warm and helpful…everybody is supportive of one another.” He elaborates, “We have a lot of social gatherings...The PTA gives us a luncheon every month.” Ken is pleased with the atmosphere of teamwork and professionalism that categorizes his new school of
three years. Before moving to his current central Ohio city school, Ken taught for 18 years in a rural southern Ohio county. He chose to leave his school district because he became “stressed out” from having to bear the brunt of his own teaching duties in addition to what he considered to be his principal’s duties. “I had a principal so weak that he could come to me for advice regarding discipline.” He continues, “That was my reason for leaving the community and coming to [current community]. I was used as a consultant without being given that title of a consultant.” He recalls how many times teachers were assigned to him to view his management techniques, “I never got credit for it.”

Ken has serious concerns regarding the degree to which teachers are formally recognized by fellow educators and administrators. He feels that by recognizing excellent teaching, educators could more easily share “pedagogical techniques that work.” Rather than supporting awards by the school PTA, which he feels are reduced to “popularity contests,” Ken suggests that teachers and administrators receive formal recognition for specific talents they possess. “Sort of like a consulting thing, where we can share good ideas that actually work with children.”

While he feels that teacher recognition within the schools could be improved, it has not prevented him from receiving validation of his teaching abilities elsewhere. Fondly, he recalls an elite teaching award that he received in 1995 from his last school community. “I know what it feels like to be recognized,” he says.

You get a crystal apple that’s etched with your name. The paper was flown in from China, because that’s where it was invented. France makes the certificate. The official calligrapher for the Queen of England does the calligraphy.
He marvels, “There were 800 eligible teachers and only six got it. One year they only awarded four. That was some validation!” From a personal standpoint, the most meaningful recognition that Ken receives comes from his students. “These children don’t even want a snow day! They’re like, ‘No, we want to come!’ That’s validation!”

Ken recently applied for National Board Certification. He remembers being approached by a colleague he greatly respected. “She said, ‘You seem very articulate and you have some good teaching ideas. Why don’t you apply?’” Even though Ken did not achieve certification on his first attempt, he praises his experience with National Board as a learning experience. “I can honestly say that I’m a better teacher because of it. It caused me to reflect on what I’m doing. That’s the positive of whether you receive it or not.” The preparation taught him other valuable lessons as well. “I can reflect and say, ‘Why do you do it this way? What’s the next step you want to accomplish?’ That kind of staff development is profound in the classroom!”

On the other hand, Ken harbors some serious concerns with the NBPTS as well. He was surprised and disappointed by some of the scores he received. To his dismay, he earned his highest score in what he felt was his weakest area. “That was the one that I was worried about, and I got the highest score possible.” He is convinced that while he writes well, he was unable to convey his love of the profession adequately. “They wanted me to paint that picture. I don’t think I was able to paint it as well as I would have liked.” Ken feels that he omitted “the obvious” in his writing because he assumed that much of what he was saying would be communicated in other ways. “I didn’t feel like I should write what the standard was by constantly repeating myself and being redundant.” When he retakes portions of the test in the near future, he insists that he will
“write toward the standards.” Ken walks away from his experience with National Board with his self-esteem intact. “I feel it doesn’t make you an outstanding educator... I still feel I’m outstanding.” But, he says, “I want National to say it!”

Like many other experienced educators, Ken worries about the media’s negative portrayal of education in America today. “You know that old adage, ‘Those who can, do, and those who can’t, teach’? I hate that!” He recalls a college roommate who used to refer to him as “just a teacher.” Ken admits he even began to say this to himself. “Then I thought, ‘Wait a minute. I am a teacher. The teacher.’ We need to get the positive out there... to get the public to understand that there are teachers who work their tails off!”

Another issue that disturbs him is what he regards as the unfair use of proficiency tests to evaluate teacher effectiveness. “In the school I’m at now, those children have a higher skill level and are more advanced.” He worries that if his previous students’ test scores had been compared to the scores of students in his current school, “It would have looked like I didn’t do anything.” He states, “I’m judged on my test scores.”

Ken feels that teachers can promote professionalism by working together. He praises the NBPTS for “trying to provide recognition for the profession.” He believes that teachers should encourage other teachers to go through the National Board process.

He offers one final view regarding the teaching profession:

We need to be on committees to select staff development... We need to take charge of our own profession and decide where we want to go. Not let somebody in an ivory tower tell us what we need to do! We can’t keep letting legislators tell us what we need to do... We need to ban together and say ‘we need standards!’

We need to take control of our own profession!
Mindy: “It’s Important for People to See What I do as Important”

Mindy is a fifth-year teacher in a large urban school district in the mid-western
United States. She currently enjoys working with third-grade students. She definitely
believes that the lessons she learned as a child have impacted on her approach to
teaching. She says that her mother raised her to follow the Bible’s lesson to “treat people
the way you want to be treated,” and was encouraged to “always do your best.” Mindy
confides, “I feel I have a great value system because of my mom.”

Mindy approaches education with a strong philosophy. “I know that I have to be
not only a friend, a mother, a babysitter and nurse, but also a teacher and protector.”
This holistic view of teaching extends into the methods that Mindy uses to work with
students. “I try to cover as many strategies as possible because I think kids learn best
different ways.” She continues, “The more ways you teach something, the more children
you’re going to teach.” A self-described visual and kinesthetic learner, Mindy attempts
to include many visual and hands-on learning opportunities for her students. She also
values having students work cooperatively with one another to improve achievement.

Rather than focusing on students’ ages or grade levels as determiners of what she
will teach, Mindy is convinced of the value of viewing children’s learning
developmentally. “I really think we need to find out where the kids are and meet their
needs.” She shares that in teaching a multi-age class the previous year, she was able to
build on students’ knowledge more easily. She emphasizes the importance of meeting
every student’s needs individually “because every child is different.” Similarly, she
assesses each child accordingly, with both formal and informal assessments designed to
fit their specific needs. She worries that the state’s emphasis on evaluating teachers’
effectiveness through proficiency scores is a narrow and inaccurate measure of her
students’ learning. She does not feel that educators should be told they are doing a poor
job “if the teacher is meeting the kids’ needs.” When teachers meet their students’ needs,
she maintains, “then they’re seeing progress.” A better alternative, she says, would be,
“Here’s this child’s writing when they came in and now [he/she] is writing complete
sentences. That’s progress! That’s an improvement!”

Mindy describes herself as a “very professionally oriented person.” She pursued
and received her master’s degree during her third year of teaching and is currently
pursuing her PhD in education. In addition, she is actively involved in helping her school
transition to a year-round education program. She feels that the teachers with whom she
works are “really friendly with each other,” but she would like to have more
opportunities for teachers “to get together and share ideas.” She observes, for example,
“There’s not a lot of professional talk.” Expressing frustration with the lack of common
planning time and opportunities for teachers to discuss professional issues, she confides
that she has “no idea” how her peers approach the actual teaching process. “We get
together and say we’re going to do this here, this here, and this here, but we don’t go any
deeper than that.”

Because no meaningful professional dialogue takes place, Mindy is convinced
that her peers do not appreciate or value one another’s teaching strengths as they should.
She relates that once, when she was asked to lead the staff in science curriculum reform,
she felt their attitude was, “Why are you standing up in front of us? You’re just another
teacher!” She notes that even as the designated science resource person, “I never got the
recognition…. Nobody came to me to ask me anything.” Similar disappointments occurred after she completed her master’s degree. “I got my master’s degree my first year there and I invited everyone to my graduation party. Three people came. Nobody even said anything to me at school. I didn’t even get a card from the staff!” Her disappointment was profound.

You know how if somebody is having a baby, they have a baby shower? They have these little things… I thought that’s something, that’s an accomplishment like having a baby or getting married! It’s more important to my job than if I got engaged… I got my master’s degree! I felt like they didn’t care.

The final blow was when Mindy sought National Board Certification this past year. “I told everybody I was doing it and I asked for everybody’s help.” She recalls, “Not one person in my staff has asked me this year how I did…. They don’t even ask me if I’m still working on it. Nothing. Nobody.”

Mindy’s involvement with National Board turned out to be a positive experience. While her scores on the assessment center portion of the test fell short of passing certification on her first attempt, she has maintained an appreciation of the system. “It made me realize that I am a good teacher,” she shares, “I did not realize how unreflective I was until I did my National Boards… I never used to say, ‘Why am I teaching it this way?’” She feels that the certification process is positive, because, “It makes you center on the students.” She praises the videotape requirement by National Board and adds that “All teachers should have to do an observation and critique on themselves.” She feels that the self-evaluation phase would “be harder on you” but would have a greater impact on one’s teaching. She praises the NBPTS for seeking to raise the standards of teaching.
and for demonstrating that teaching is "a professional career...I guess that's important for people to see what I do as important."

With respect to National Board, Mindy shares a host of concerns regarding the Board’s ability to accurately evaluate accomplished teaching. She feels that her low score for professional accomplishment was unjustified.

I got a two on professional development. How can you judge what I've done in my life on professional development? In my five years of teaching, I've accomplished a lot! I have my masters degree, I've taken all of these workshops, I've taught a multi-age classroom, and I've done presentations. You're going to give me a two?

Mindy wonders, "Probably the person who read it does not believe in my belief that multi-age for my kids was the best way for them to learn." She continues, "All of the kids in my multi-age room went up ten reading levels!" Mindy speculates, "Whoever read my paper obviously didn't agree that multi-age was a good way for kids to learn."

Expressing additional concerns over the subjectivity of assessment, Mindy puzzles over receiving her highest scores from NBPTS in a subject area that she considers to be her weakest.

They tell you how it's scored, they have pages on how they score things with the rubric, but you still wonder. I think that the scoring is very opinionated. If a different person would have read my paper, I might have gotten a different score.

Finally, Mindy explains her frustration with the assessment center portion of the certification process.
I don’t test well. I don’t think that the computer test tested what I knew. I’m a paper person. I’d rather have paper and pen to reflect…. You don’t have time to write it out and type it in. I didn’t have time to reflect and think about it.

Regardless of Mindy’s criticism of the assessment process, she praises NBPTS for helping to promote teacher professionalism. She hopes the NBPTS organization will help to improve professional status. “Everything that’s in the media is negative,” she observes. “They don’t say the good. They really don’t.” As a result she believes that society does not fully appreciate the teaching profession. “When I told my dad I was going to become a teacher, he said, ‘Why do you want to be a teacher? You’re not going to make any money!’” She has felt discouragement from fellow teachers as well. “My friend who teaches in the suburbs said, ‘I don’t think I could teach in your district. It seems like it would be so rough and the kids are so bad.’” Mindy feels that this teacher’s fear comes from ignorance of the urban teacher’s complicated role.

To help raise professional status, she states that she would like to see excellent teaching recognized through publications and television. “I think showing more of the positive things. It’s not picked up by the media, which is what everybody looks at.” Finally, to promote professionalism, Mindy insists that teachers must assume both a professional and appropriate attitude. “There’s a level of respect that I think is equal to other professions…. You are respectful of other teachers.”

Phil: “We Are Who We Perceive Ourselves to Be”

Phil is an educator with 14 years of experience at the high school level. He currently acts as both an administrator and educator in a large urban school district in the
mid-west. He came to teaching as a result of the influence of both of his parents, who also were educators. "My family had an unspoken premium of being helpful...to mankind," he says, "I knew I had to enjoy what I did so that I could have a good career and not just a job." Phil views the professional teacher's role as multifaceted.

There's no one descriptor for those who are doing the job appropriately. We are the lifesavers, the fathers and mothers. We're academic guides. As educators we are teaching particular subject matter, but more importantly reverence to life. Building socialized interaction, ability, skills — we're developing that. There's so much that we do!

For 2 years, Phil taught English and journalism courses in the Chicago Public Schools. He later moved to Nebraska, where he taught for a short time before eventually settling in a suburban district on the outskirts of a major Ohio city where he taught for seven years. Currently, Phil is an "All-But-Dissertation" [ABD] doctoral student and has secured his principal and assistant superintendent certification. In the past year, he decided to return to the urban schools by accepting a position as an assistant principal in a large Ohio high school. He shares, "I'll always see myself as a teacher no matter what the title is. The bottom line is, I'm a teacher."

Phil returned to work in an inner-city schools environment, he says, because, "That is my passion! Being able to work with those who do not have. Being able to build for those where there's no hope." Throughout the conversation, Phil particularly worries about the well-being of both urban students and their families. He feels that many of the parents hesitate to become involved in schools because they simply may be "put off by institutions." He would like teachers to help parents navigate their
institutions so that they may begin to view the schools as "system friendly." To make schooling more accessible to students, he feels that teachers must adjust their professional practices "based on your population." He explains,

In an urban environment I can’t teach the same way that I’m going to teach in a suburban environment. The actual content and academic standards for students may be the same within a discipline, but the pedagogy and instructional methodology will be different.

Many of Phil’s concern for the way teachers work with urban children stem from his own childhood schooling experience. As a young child attending Catholic elementary schools in Chicago, Phil spent his first year in high school at what he described as the number one school in the state of Illinois. He described it as a privately run Jesuit institution with approximately 88 percent Caucasian, four percent Asian, four percent Hispanic, and four percent African-American students. Phil transferred after his freshman year to graduate from a Chicago public high school. Phil shares how as an African-American, he felt the weight of being considered part of the "Talented 10 [top students]." He recalls his high school English teacher as a person who "did not recognize that Black English, Ebonics, has its own syntax and grammatical structure." He also remembers the way his teacher "wouldn’t offend" her second-generation Spanish-speaking students "because she had an understanding that their grammar may be broken. My ghetto-eze was down!" he laughs. "There wasn’t a mutual respect for the language," he notes, "and language is reflective of the culture." Nevertheless, as a whole, Phil recalls with fondness the educators who worked with him as a child. "When I looked at
my teachers, I saw people who cared for me and made sure I knew it.” He adds, “They respected my culture, for the most part, and pushed me to do the best that I could.”

From his experiences as an African-American male having been educated and employed in a predominantly Caucasian environment, Phil feels that he learned how to successfully negotiate his way into many different work environments in which African-Americans were traditionally excluded. He also voiced that he is concerned about the “double-standards that exist between professionals like him and his mainstream peers.” He said,

In mainstream environments where very few people-of-color are hired, the person-of color teacher must be competent enough to not only teach Caucasian students....but they have the additional burden of hearing the bulk of...racial issues, concerns, and problems...that stem from students, parents, staff and the community.

He comments, “Generally, I had to be better prepared and more qualified, and more apt to give than many of my counterparts.” He cited as an example, “One Caucasian middle school teacher...ran down the hall to get the ‘African-American teacher’ when two students began to fight after one had been called a ‘Nigger’.” Phil was angered that the district failed to discipline the teacher for “their incompetence in dealing with students and racial issues.”

Phil added that he has also observed the reverse phenomenon as both a student and a teacher. He comments,

The systemic practice of selective resource utilization means teachers who are burnt out, problems, or are not generally good enough to teach Caucasian students
were shipped to teach people-of-color. This was used as an administrative means to punish “trouble-maker” teachers – place them with “those students.”

With respect to the racial inroads he has made, he says,

There’s a community litmus test. Unless you not only have the appearance but you can definitely benefit the children there, and you have a competent skill and you can demonstrate it, then there’s no way that as an “outsider” you can come in.

To deal with these issues over his career, Phil shares that he has often strove for various teaching certifications because he viewed it as a

...mandate that I would have to be recognized for what it is I provide. Early in my career, I thought credentialization would do that, with multiple degrees and so forth. But it didn’t take long to figure out, that wasn’t going to be the ticket.

Phil pursued National Board certification during his last two years of teaching. He viewed it “as a way to secure what they [those in power] wouldn’t give, but also as a means to open up doors for...others to receive promotions in his school district.” He missed passing the certification process by only three points. Philosophically, he shares, “I felt I had a very successful, very positive experience. Just because I didn’t get certification, so what?” He is quick to praise the National Board system for providing a means for education self-evaluation. “I enjoyed the videotape of seeing myself teach. That fulfilled a self-evaluatory stage for me.” In reference to the scores that he received, he reflects, “I think I know why I got the scores...I got the scores I deserved.” He maintains, “I was content with myself before doing this, and I’m more than content now.”

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Phil has a number of concerns regarding the assessment required by the National Board system. He shares that during his graduate studies, he conducted research related to the assessment measures utilized by National Board and brought the results to the attention of the organization. “I challenged them on standardization….If it’s focused on what students should know and be able to do and if you can prove that these kids are being successful, how can they argue with you?” He feels that National Board should accept additional standardized and developmental assessments that prove students’ progress in working with a teacher. He remains dissatisfied with the Board’s response to issues that he raised, and maintains that the organization is looking for teachers to “do a song and dance” and “feed them back exactly what they want to hear.”

Phil’s ability to look past his own score from National Board to the larger value of the process may stem from his feelings regarding validation.

For me personally, the way I can be validated as a teacher is when that kid comes up on the street after I haven’t seen him for two or three years in the summer and he says, “Why thank you Mr. _____ You helped me get into college. If it wasn’t for you I wouldn’t be going. Thank you for the faith that you placed in me and your willingness to work with me.”

He says validation may also come from a parent thanking him for his efforts with his/her child. “That’s the type of validation that to me stands out. If it’s heartfelt, then I know that personally I would appreciate it. I think most people would.” Phil adds parenthetically, “Money doesn’t motivate me.” In the final analysis, he says, “I think ultimately people have to stop looking for others to acknowledge them and just do what they do.”

101
Phil feels that the public's view of education is in need of a "positive media blitz." He recalls hearing the disparaging old adage, "If you can't make it at doing something else, then you become a teacher." He declares, "That's an ass-backwards mentality!"

The negative emphasis on education bothers him. "If you read the Phi Delta Kappa poll every year, they'll list 20-30 public concerns, with education being among the top 20." He adds, "It's not only the education profession, but many professions. If that's the way it is, that's the way it is. Fine. We shouldn't be in it for the glory anyway. If people don't understand, people don't understand."

To those teachers who are concerned about "professionalizing" teaching, Phil sends a message. "If you carry yourself as a confident and competent professional, you'll be treated as a confident and competent professional." As the dialogue closes, he laughs, "I've never said, 'I'm just a teacher.' Hell, I positively change, create, motivate, stimulate, build and develop the mind and, in essence, the quality of life for many students!"

**Tanya: What Makes Me the Kind of Teacher I Am**

Tanya is an inner-city teacher in central Ohio with nine years of elementary teaching experience. Having grown up in a rural area in the Midwestern United States, she remembers learning that a "teacher was an important member of the community." She recalls, "My family instilled in me that a teacher was to be respected."

Tanya feels that she relied on her teachers perhaps more than other children her age. "My life was full of difficult experiences growing up. Some of the most caring and influential people in my life at the time were my educators." For example, "They made
sure that my family was doing okay. They would check to see if there would be Christmas presents for me and my four younger sisters. They would make community contacts for things like glasses and medical care.” Despite these adversities, Tanya also recalls that her teachers held high expectations for her. “They helped me to realize a resiliency that would make me believe that I would always land on my feet.” Reflecting back over the years, Tanya says, “I have never forgotten how these wonderful people looked out for me and my family.”

Citing the important impact that these educators had on her childhood, Tanya is certain, “This is what makes me the kind of teacher that I am.” She adds that her goal is to meet students’ physical and emotional needs, as well as to challenge them academically. She shares an example.

One main thing every teacher can do is not make excuses for a child. I say, “This kid probably didn’t get any sleep last night because their parents were up partying. This kid probably didn’t get anything to eat and they’re probably hungry so we shouldn’t expect them to learn.” How could they be learning? Well, they can be learning and the only way they’re going to get out of that environment is if a teacher has high expectations and has the things that the child needs to learn in the classroom.

“Sometimes,” she says, “that means having a box of cereal in your classroom and filling up a little baggie of it and giving it to them.”

She values the importance of building “community” among her students within the classroom. “I don’t think you can facilitate a good learning environment if you don’t create community,” she comments, “I know that if children don’t feel safe and they don’t
feel that they can take risks with their classmates, they’re not going to be very good learners.” Tanya builds community by creating many opportunities for group learning and follow-up discussion, in which she helps students to see the value of being “responsible for their classmates.”

Other key teaching beliefs include an emphasis on the importance of becoming familiar with a students’ home culture. As a Caucasian she shares, “When I started teaching at an African-American school, I started realizing that I almost have to become bicultural.” She declares,

If you are asked to go and be a part of their community at any time, you should be able to function in it, … If you’re in an African-American school, you should be able to sing the Black National Anthem, because they sing it in church quite a bit.

Tanya also maintains that teachers have a critical role in helping families to help their child. “I think sometimes in order to educate a child, you have to educate a family. You have to be willing to go into their home and model lessons.” Tanya admits however, I knew that there would be children who would need a special interest taken in them, but nothing could have prepared me for the tremendous needs that I found in the inner-city communities of the large urban district in which I teach.

In an effort to better meet the needs of her students, Tanya recently accepted a teaching position in an Urban Academy for Professional Development within her district. She happily states, “At this school, everybody shares their ideas. We go into each other’s classrooms all the time and talk about what the other is doing.” She enjoys the peer coaching and observation shared to provide ongoing feedback among teachers within her building. “I trust them to do that. I trust that they can come in my room at any time and
that I can say, ‘What did you think of that lesson?’” She is confident that her peers will, “give me honest feedback,” and describes the teachers at the school as “outstanding.” Says Tanya, “They are the most reflective teachers I’ve ever met. They work so hard and they’re constantly thinking about how to improve their building and how to improve their teaching.” Staff commitment to professional development is also exceptional, according to Tanya. Teachers in her building have voluntarily extended their workday to include one hour of professional development at the end of every school day. “The philosophy of the school is that professional development is to be embedded into your workday…. It’s really incredible,” explains Tanya. “It’s totally led by the teachers. The principal is there about half the time.”

Tanya notes that the staff’s willingness to work as a team is not without difficulties. Often, when teachers are discussing professional issues, she says, “They don’t agree. It’s hard to develop consensus.” The teachers in her building, for example, have recently been conducting an inquiry into the best way to utilize time in their building and have even discussed the issue of year-round schooling. She notes that “There’s some discord among the staff” related to the year-round school movement, adding that she has been asked to facilitate further discussions on the matter. A believer in working cooperatively, she shares, “I think teachers need to build…teamwork…to learn how to lean on each other and trust in each other.”

In contrast, Tanya recalls the isolated environments in which she taught before coming to her current school. “I’ve been in buildings where teachers close their doors,” she says. “They have their own ideas…. I don’t know if it’s out of fear or that they lack their own self-trust in their teaching…or if it’s competition.” She feels that various
teaching methods that have come and gone may be to blame for lowering teachers’ collective confidence. Fads such as throwing out phonics instruction “kind of leaves some teachers behind at times” and lowers their self-esteem. “I think that we are very isolated and that we don’t think of ourselves as professionals,” she continues, “I think one thing we really want is for our profession to be valued, and I don’t think we feel very valued even though we know we impact every person in America.”

Tanya chose to seek National Board certification in 1998. She recalls, “I kind of wanted to validate myself as a teacher and make sure I was really doing the right things and make sure that other people thought I was doing the right things.” In addition to seeking validation of her teaching abilities, Tanya also wanted to “try to strengthen myself as a teacher.” She passed all but three sections, which she will retake in the near future. She blames her failed first attempt to lack of time on the application process, in addition to not actually understanding about teaching concepts as well as she should have. “I deserved every single score I got... for the effort that I put into some parts, I got what I deserved.” She recalls one aspect in particular and makes an admission:

My science score came back and it was really low. You know what? I wasn’t teaching concepts. I truly wasn’t! I did not understand how to teach a concept, how to assess whether the children got it, and to build on that knowledge later on.

Tanya feels that her experience with National Board has taught her to be reflective. “I have to think about what I’m doing on a regular basis and how I impact children. I have to think whether what I’m trying to teach children is what they’re actually learning.” She concedes, “You have to become reflective when you go through the process.”
One of her major motivations in seeking National Board certification revolved around a desire to promote teacher professionalism. "I think in every other industry and profession that people are recognized in their jobs and they get promotions and they get incentives to become better. Why shouldn’t teachers?"

She rejects the notion that educators are simply “glorified babysitters” and asks, “Why should we be thought of that way because we’re not!” She feels the only way to combat negative perceptions of the profession is “to recognize people who are outstanding and who make the community more aware of what our job is.” She feels that National Board is providing a vital service in recognizing excellent teachers through certification.

Even beyond National Board certification, Tanya strongly believes that good teachers need to be recognized. “I think you should know what an outstanding educator is.” For example, “If you’re willing to be observed on a regular basis and model successful strategies for other teachers, then you should be recognized! You should be a classroom that’s one of the first places people go to observe.”

As part of the effort to recognize teaching excellence, Tanya believes that teachers need to go to the media. She is convinced, “The only way that you’re going to get true credibility for our profession is for other people to respect what we do and understand how difficult the process is.”

Trina: Love Your Kids and Love Your School

Trina is a teacher of gifted and talented elementary students in a small rural school district in southern Ohio. She has taught for eight years, first as a teacher of
students with developmental handicaps and specific learning disabilities, and later as a teacher of the gifted and talented. “I was raised in a very loving household,” she recounts. “My parents encouraged me to love all.” Trina applies this lesson within her own classroom. “I have a natural love and desire to teach year after year. I have been teaching for eight years and I get more excited each year. Obstacles are exciting challenges that I look forward to conquering.” As a child, she recalls her fondness for kinesthetic activities. “I loved hands-on activities. This is the style of learning that has impacted my teaching the most.”

Trina describes her classroom as a place that “is filled with tons of hands-on activities for children.” Labeling herself as a constructivist, she underscores her approach to teaching: “I never ever follow my lesson plans. Never.” She believes her students “learn best from working with each other and working with each other by solving things themselves. She shares examples, “I lay problems out to them and they get to decide everything. They decide what units we’re going to study for the year, they decide what fieldtrips we’re going to take. Absolutely everything in the program’s decided by them!”

Her methodology actually is modeled after one of her past teachers, she shares. One teacher in all my years in school really influenced me. She used lots of hands-on, where everyone else basically read and lectured. She believed in us. We could feel it. She expected 110 percent and you wanted to please her because she believed in you so much. She was so excited about learning. She thought that our opinions mattered. I knew I wanted to teach like that one day.

At the suggestion of this esteemed teacher, Trina attended a local university undergraduate program for future educators and became involved in a program called
"The Institute for Democracy in Education." During this period, she studied the teachings of John Dewey. Trina recalls, "They believed every child needs to have the right to express [his/her] opinion and not be silenced in the classroom...to take a vote on everything assigned. I believe that way too."

One of the roles that Trina prizes most as an educator is the opportunity to offer students "an understanding of the larger world." She worries that because her students live in a "rural, isolated area," they may not have as many opportunities to gain a global perspective of multicultural learning without her intervention. She feels that it is critical that rural teachers "help the kids understand that there are other people out in the world. Even in your own setting." In order to do this, she has sought to make ties between the school and community. "I think the school shouldn't be an isolated place and that they should branch out to the community members, businesses, and bring the community more into the schools."

When asked about the feel of her school environment, Trina answers, "The school that I'm in currently I really am pleased with. Especially with the discipline compared to the last two schools." She explains that fellow teachers are "there for the kids. They always spend extra hours at school to make things exciting for them the next day. I really enjoy it. I like the attitude of the teachers better than any of the other schools that I've been at." When it comes to working with other teachers, Trina states, "I'm fairly isolated because I have a [remotely located] resource room and I see [their] students once a week." However, the interaction that she does have with other teachers is "very positive." Unlike past schools at which she taught, "We seem to share ideas back and
forth quite generously. It's not like 'these are my materials and no one else can have them.'"

Trina’s interactions with the school principal have also been mostly positive. “He really gives me a great deal of flexibility because I have a different kind of program. I’m allowed to take a lot of fieldtrips.” However, Trina notes, “That stirs up just a little bit of animosity between the other teachers because they’re only allowed one field trip a year.”

On a minor negative observation, she believes that the staff feels that the principal doesn’t always listen to staff needs. She says, for example, when she was applying for National Board Certification, “Only one comment was made [by the principal] during the whole time. That was basically when I brought it up.” She would have liked more support from her principal during the application process. Similarly, when she received several achievement awards for teaching, she remembers, “that was really never recognized in the school....I think it’s just good PR for the principal to do those things to keep the people happy.”

How does Trina feel about the issue of validating teacher professionalism?

I believe excellent teachers should be recognized.... I think they should be recognized quite frequently by administrators, county school boards, state and national. If the principal would just say, “Yeah, that was really nice what you’re doing. You’re doing a good job!”...even that validates you. At least someone’s paying attention to all the work you’ve put forth.

Trina draws her most meaningful validation from her students. “I keep scrapbooks in my room of little things that I am given from students throughout the year. These scrapbooks mean more to me than any of the awards that I have.” In general,
Trina feels that teachers don’t often focus on issues of validation. “I think a lot of them aren’t concerned with that…. I just don’t think that it’s constantly on their minds.”

Trina considers her experience with National Board certification to have been positive. She praises National Board for requiring teachers to “reflect on your practices, monitor yourself, and decide if that’s working.” She feels that she learned most from the section in which she was required to videotape her teaching. “I found that I focused on certain students because I expected that they would give me the answers that I want…. I’m really bad at lull time because I want an answer and I want it now.”

Although Trina has two sections to retake to become certified, she feels that the National Board evaluation system is fair. “I really think it’s a system made where they cannot have biases…because [there are] too many people evaluating it.” She feels that she did not achieve certification on her first attempt because she rushed through the process. “I didn’t take the required 200 hours…it’s embarrassing to admit that. I really crammed it in, in about a month.”

Trina genuinely believes the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is promoting “professionalism of teachers.” She feels that the NBPTS will be instrumental in helping other organizations to “recognize what teachers do.” Noting that, “you hear so much negativity in the news and newspapers,” she maintains that teachers themselves must be proactive in the task of raising the field’s status by “acting as a professional.” She also observes, “I see a lot of teachers who come to school not dressed as a teacher, or they come to school with an attitude that’s not a teacher’s attitude.” Trina’s solution? “If you’re in the teaching profession, then come with…a positive attitude that you love kids and you love your school. If you don’t, get out!”
Teachers Who Received National Board Certification

While approximately 56 percent of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standard’s applicants are not granted certification, the other 44 percent receive certification (Harman, 1999). The following five participants share their professional belief systems and their feelings toward National Board certification.

Alicia: *How You Teach is More Important than What You Teach*

Seven years ago, Alicia relocated to Ohio to seek her teaching certificate after earning a psychology degree at the University of Massachusetts. She feels that many of her childhood experiences have affected the kind of teacher she is today. She shares, “I struggled with self-esteem issues as a child. Therefore, I’ve tried to make my classroom a physically and emotionally safe learning environment.” As a child, she recalls learning the importance of following her dreams, working hard, and assuming responsibility for helping others. She feels that these values continue to impact her professional life.

Alicia has been teaching fourth grade for seven years at an inner-city alternative school in central Ohio. She shares enthusiastically her school’s unique philosophy. “There are only two schools in the whole country solely devoted to Project Adventure, an umbrella under which there are a lot of components.” Alicia says that students are given opportunities to experience physical challenges, to take risks, and to develop problem-solving skills that integrate into the curriculum. “The components of Project Adventure are authentic assessment, hands-on learning, and cooperative groups.”
fact that it’s a school-wide philosophy really helps the kids. For a whole school to have that philosophy is kind of unique!”

Alicia describes the school culture in which she works as extremely positive. “I think kids are learning and they’re excited to be at school. We have high attendance. The teachers want to be here.” She explains, “The school culture has been that you work really hard.” Staff members who didn’t work quite as hard “felt that pressure even though it was unspoken.” Alicia worries that her new principal is not as rigorous about keeping those standards as high. “I feel like there are still a lot of people wanting to work hard but that some...are saying, ‘Why should we?’” Alicia confides, “I’m worried about the future of our school.”

Her focus on hard work and high standards is a natural outflow of the family values with which she grew up. As a child, she was taught to follow her dreams. “Hard work is its own reward,” remembers Alicia. “My Dad always told me that if you don’t like how something is done, then step in and do it yourself.” Trying to live up to that standard, Alicia accepted the role of faculty representative in her building this year. She is the liaison representative between the union and staff members. “I don’t really enjoy that role honestly, but I did it because I didn’t like how it was being run in the past.” Alicia also serves as the math/science advocate for her building and as a chairperson on the mentorship committee. Again a family-taught value, Alicia finds satisfaction in helping others. “I feel a big responsibility to be a good role model for other teachers. To be supportive in mentoring new teachers is the role that I have.”

Within her fourth-grade classroom, Alicia relies heavily on cooperative learning. “I try to think about my day and mix things with independent time and group work time.”
She explains that she utilizes textbooks “as a resource rather than as a primary tool.” During the past year, she has focused on implementing a balanced literacy program that includes shared reading, shared writing, guided reading and guided writing. In addition, she implements project work to “give all of the kids ways that they can extend or go above and beyond what the minimum expectations are.... The kids do a lot of projects in my room that are open-ended,” she says. “I feel that way the kids of higher ability can really run with it.”

In speaking with Alicia, one quickly gains an appreciation of the way in which she applies rigorous expectations to her view of the teacher professional. “I think of a professional as someone who reflects on their practice. Somebody who reflects is thinking and learning and changing and trying to do the best that they can... A professional knows it’s the right thing to do because it works.” Alicia worries, however, “Sometimes I think of teachers as just people who go in and do their thing and leave.” True professionals, according to Alicia, reflect on their practice, read professional materials, and attend conferences. “They are reflective. They are interested in the process of wanting to learn more. They inspire other people around them to do really great things through their example.” Further, Alicia feels that professionals are activists who “also push thinking in others. Not in a harsh or mean or abrasive way, but they are always questioning their own practice and questioning what’s going on so that they can get better.”

When asked how all teachers might be equipped to meet such high standards, Alicia replies, “It has to start from the teacher in the classroom. They are questioning why things are going the way they are in their own rooms.” Conversely, she reflects,
“When it comes from the top down, I don’t think it’s very worthwhile.” She goes on to share an example. “At the beginning of the summer I went to see Reggie Routman in Cincinnati. I really enjoyed that because I chose to go see her.” However, Alicia is not certain that all teachers are capable of taking control of their practice to a similar degree. “Sometimes I feel like people are either reflective or they’re not. Like it’s sort of a natural... a part of their personality.” In her own dealings with a variety of teachers she reflects, “When people ask questions or complain about things, I try to ask them questions to get them to think about why that’s happening. I think it’s also like leading them in a process of self-discovery.” Alicia shares an example from last year when her new “buddy teacher” experienced management problems.

She was complaining to me one day about how she did all of these things with her art center and how the kids eventually had taken everything. ‘I’m not doing that anymore!’ she said resolutely. So I tried to just ask questions about ‘Have you thought about why that’s happening? Have you noticed a certain time when that’s happening more than others? Does it have something to do with where the art center is placed?’

Alicia laments, “I think too many people aren’t reflecting on their own practice. They might need somebody from above to say ‘Hey, why don’t you think about this?’” She concludes, “There are a lot of people who just don’t question...they just don’t reflect.”

Looking back on her past seven years of teaching, Alicia notes that many things have occurred within herself as a teaching professional. When she first began to teach, she remembered, “I focused mostly on day-to-day teaching in my classroom. Over the past few years, I have been in more leadership positions in my school. I have begun to
spend more time working on building-wide educational issues.” Regarding professional
development, she states,

When I first started teaching I got a lot of those activity book kinds of things. I’m
not into those anymore. I’m more into books like “Conversations” [by Reggie
Routman], because they get me to think about things in my own way. Now I
think about resources to improve my teaching, ways for me to think about why I
do what I do instead of worksheets or testing.

In addition to these changes, Alicia has recently become a National Board-certified
teacher.

When asked why she chose to seek National Board certification, Alicia replies, “I
wanted to make sure that my teaching was good coming from somebody who wasn’t
connected to me personally.” Elaborating further,

I think of myself as a pretty good teacher. I’ve always gotten good evaluations
from my principals, but I’ve also had personal relationships with those people. So
I’ve always wondered “Is it because he likes me or is it because I’m a nice
person?” There’s no way to compare your own teaching to others!

She felt that the National Board assessment was “more objective.” Additional
motivators included the perceived challenge, monetary reward, and increased recognition.

“I feel like I want to be learning and growing but I want it to be counting towards
something…. It’s working toward a specified goal…passing, passing, finishing.” Alicia
concedes feeling a sense of validation from achieving National Board certification. She
suggests that National Board is “really the number-one way that I think many teachers
use to validate themselves. I think that’s the reason that I did it.” She is concerned,
however, that many teachers who are hungry for validation may be exiting the classroom
to satisfy this need. “That’s one of the reasons I wanted to do it [National Board]. I
wanted to grow and be recognized but stay in the classroom.”

Why are teachers who are capable of meeting the National Board’s standards for
accomplishment hungry for validation of their abilities? Asserts Alicia, “As teachers,
we’re such givers. Because we give so much of ourselves, that’s our heart. It’s very
personal to me.” She explains further, “I feel like as a profession, we’re under­
recognized and under-appreciated. We should make more money.” Interestingly, Alicia
points out that some administrators may serve to devalue teachers. “My principal said to
us the other day ‘You’re all replaceable. I can find somebody to fill your room.’ That’s
his attitude! I know that’s true on some level, but I want to feel like I’m *irreplaceable.*”
Even more ironic, Alicia suggests that teachers themselves may be undermining
professional morale.

I guess I don’t feel *that* valued in general by the school community or by the
larger community...that’s the thing. Feeling devalued by even other teachers who
teach in different districts who think “Why would you teach in... (Alicia’s inner-
city district)? *Good* teachers get out!”

To counteract this vicious cycle of devaluing teachers, Alicia suggests, “We
[educators] should be able to articulate research that backs up our teaching.” In addition,
she suggests that raising the standards on teacher education programs would be helpful.
“Teaching people about everything that’s involved...publicizing more about what we
do.” Alicia concludes, “It’s a complicated question. There’s no easy answer.”
Citrine: Teaching is a Divine Calling

Citrine has been a kindergarten teacher in a large urban school district in Ohio for the past 32 years. She enthusiastically recalls “I got that divine call when I was in third grade. That’s when I knew I was going to teach….I have been doing that for 32 years and loving every single minute of it!” Citrine grew up in a family where parents placed a high value on securing an education. “In our home there was no question about going on to higher education and no question about the sacrifices they were willing to make to help us succeed.”

Citrine describes her approach to teaching as guided by principles of developmentally appropriate practice, in which the child’s social, emotional, and academic needs are addressed in the school setting.

I consider it important to be concerned about the students’ needs and about the whole child, not just a subject. If they come to school hungry, they’re not necessarily going to be able to learn… My primary role as a teacher is to impact the students hopefully in a positive way — not just academically but in all areas. Even during her early years of student teaching, Citrine recalls, “I had this philosophy that they [children] need academics and they need the play too -- somewhere there’s this middle ground where you do both of those things.” Rather than expecting her kindergarteners to sit in assigned seats, Citrine believes that young children should be allowed to “sit wherever they want so long as it’s not distracting.” She frequently tells her students “You learn from your friends -- go ahead and talk!”
As a natural outflow of Catrine’s strong views and extensive teaching experience, Catrine has served in many leadership capacities throughout her career. Within her own district, for many years, she has acted as a member of an early childhood committee. There’s a strong belief that kindergarten teachers need to know developmentally appropriate practices so that the school day (switching to full-day kindergarten) does not become a watered-down older curriculum. I had a leadership role in that because I did presentations when we were phasing in the program.

Similarly, she supervised a “Build-Up-to Kindergarten” program in her district many years ago “to try to give at-risk children a head start before they went to school.”

Currently Catrine travels extensively for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as a presenter, facilitator, and trainer. She makes presentations for the State Department of Education and participates in teleconferences for National Board to teach candidates how to demonstrate reflective abilities. Each month she travels out of town to mentor a group of candidates attempting to become Board-certified. Also, she works during the summer training teachers who assess candidates’ work. Catrine proudly refers to her leadership experience with National Board as a “wonderful professional growth experience…. Being an assessor, you see people’s materials from all over the country so you pick up ideas.”

Catrine hints that her willingness to take on greater professional leadership roles likely stems from her enthusiasm for learning. One reason I continue to take courses is because I’ve been teaching so long that I never want to get stale in the classroom. I just want to always be energized for
the kids! That’s why I did National Board and that’s why I attend seminars…because I don’t want to lose it!

When asked to discuss how she feels about recognition and validation of her teaching skill, Catrine responds,

I have mixed feelings on that really. I think accomplished educators need to be recognized. In any other profession, you’re going to receive merit pay or you’re going to receive a promotion. I think it does something for your psyche when people say it publicly.

While attending a National Board award ceremony, she remembers the National Board president addressing newly certified teachers by saying, “I feel like I should bow down to you all!” Catrine was pleased that the president recognized the large amount of hard work that went into becoming a National Board Certified Teacher.

While her primary form of validation is received “every minute of the day by my students,” Catrine has also received additional formal recognition. After 32 years of teaching excellence, she was recently awarded a prestigious national teaching title. This award ceremony was televised across the nation. She reflects,

I have a little problem with that because of the professional jealousy. Once it’s made public, you find people who try to see something you’re not doing…you could see it in their eyes [some fellow teachers]. They were just delighted because my kids acted up in the hallway, in the lunchroom, or on the playground. it’s like, “Oh, you’re not perfect!”

Catrine’s frustration with professional jealousy is tempered by her thoughtful reflections regarding the possible origins of such jealousy.
It's such an isolated profession. People tend to just close their doors and do what they want to do in their own rooms. They probably think “Oh if she’s doing it [using a particular teaching method] they’re going to make me do it.”

However, Catrine resolves the jealousy issues in her mind this way. “A lot of times I think the teachers who raise the most ruckus or make the most snide comments are probably those who are not as committed to the profession as others. They see what you’re doing as making them look worse.” She sums up her thoughts by sending a message to jealous educators. “You had the same opportunity [to apply for National Board Certification] I did. You may for some reason choose not to.”

What would make a teacher as experienced and respected as Catrine choose to subject herself to the rigors of National Board assessment? “It was more personal. I needed to know myself. I kept hearing ‘Oh, you’re doing a good job, oh you’re doing a wonderful job, you’re a good teacher, I want my child in your class.’ But I thought ‘When I go for National Board, I’ll know for myself.’” Upon passing the evaluation she began to think, “Oh yeah, maybe I really am [good]…. People all over the country believed that the way I was teaching was OK!”

When asked how Catrine feels that the public receives the education profession, she responds in a disheartened tone.

The perception is not that great. I think once they actually network with a teacher or they get into a classroom or they finally hear about the good things that are going on, then it shoots up…. We need to do something about the media. They give us a bad name, unfortunately.
Her ideas for improving publicity for public schools include joining a coalition to challenge the way in which the media represents schools. "You can call them and say 'We’re doing these wonderful things.'" But the media responds with “Someone took a gun to school -- we’re going there!"

Catrine possesses strong views about the type of assessments that are currently used to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers. When asked to share her experience with the most effective evaluation for teachers, she responds that her district had a program in place five years ago known as the Teacher Appraisal Process.

I thought it was a wonderful program because you chose a colleague to be your mentor.... You would say to that colleague, “These are the things I want you to look for while I’m teaching.” Instead of just your principal coming in and sitting there for just a few minutes.... Most of my male principals had no concept of what you teach in kindergarten. They’re afraid of kindergarteners! They have no concept of what I should be doing!

Catrine later laments that this program “went out the window.”

How does Catrine feel about the many and varied responsibilities that she has assumed? She steadfastly maintains that a prominent characteristic of a quality teacher is a “willingness to go beyond the call of duty.... That means that we all work like dogs, but that we don’t mind it.... It’s a very full plate, but it’s a calling.”
Leah: Teacher: Know Thyself...

Leah is a newly certified National Board teacher with seven years of elementary teaching experience. She is currently employed as a second-grade teacher in a small, upper-class suburban district in central Ohio.

Leah grew up in a family that she describes as having “very solid family values.” These values included a focus on good health, hard work, and family time. Leah recalls the emphasis her parents placed on “the respect you show to others despite their differences or similarities to our family.” Interestingly, both Leah’s parents and husband are educational administrators. She feels that this close tie may provide her with “a little bit different perspective than other people” on how she views day-to-day school operations from her vantage as a classroom teacher.

Leah describes herself as a “goal-oriented” teacher who is “continually taking classes.” She has already become certified as a school psychologist and is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in education. In the future, she hopes to use her doctorate in educational psychology to become a teacher educator at either the university or school district level. In dialogue, Leah presented a very holistic approach to integrating both her personal and professional lives. She explains,

I think that you need to know yourself personally before you can know yourself as a teacher.... If you don’t have that piece of knowing yourself and knowing what your personal goals are; knowing what your personal strengths and issues are, knowing what your typical issues are; then you can’t be as effective as a teacher in the classroom. As I was growing up, dinner table discussions always related around educational topics. Attending school functions before we were school age
was normal. Seeing them (her parents) model quality administrator and teacher behaviors has definitely affected my teaching.

Leah has arrived at a “philosophy of how I feel children best learn and how I can most effectively teach them.” She describes her classroom pedagogy as including “a lot of hands-on activities” and “investigations.” She allows children to explore through the use of centers and stations. Leah prefers to integrate her curriculum by centering each subject area around one larger theme. “I sat down at the beginning [of the school year]... with all my curriculum objectives and said, ‘How can I fit these together to meet [her goals in] science, social studies, and language arts?’” She decided to focus on community.

We go through [curriculum plans] at the beginning of the year and start off with home-community and everything’s centered around the home. Then we study school community and everything’s centered around school. Right now we’re into neighborhood community.... It helps me with making sure that I’m covering everything.”

Leah struggles, as do most teachers, with concerns over how to meet the educational needs of a wide variety of learners in her classroom. “You have all of these different types of learners in your classroom and you have to meet all of their needs. But at the same time, you’re one person with one tool bag of tricks and one perception of things.” As part of her solution, she utilizes a holistic approach to teaching.

I have to make sure that I teach hands-on so that a child who needs to touch things is going to learn. I have to make sure I write it on the board so the child who’s
visual sees it. I have to make sure I explain it verbally and have them repeat it back so the child who is auditory understands it.

When it comes to Leah's multiple roles as a teacher, she feels that she is a facilitator with her students. "I'm almost like a leader of the classroom, but I'm also a learner...I organize the learning and I open those doors and opportunities for the children to be leaders." With other teachers in her building, Leah worries that "I sometimes feel like I have a lot of things to share but so often I don't because I don't want to impose and I don't want to feel like I'm saying 'I'm doing it the right way.'" She is quick to clarify, "It's not that I look at it as if I'm trying to change how they teach, because they're wonderful teachers.... I don't think it's my place to do that. In a different role maybe but not as a colleague."

With parents she feels that "I'm more of an informant.... I try to get them as involved and give them as many opportunities to become a part of our classroom as possible...to make them feel that they're an important part of that learning environment."

Toward her principal, Leah feels the responsibility of making certain that "I'm covering all of my curriculum objectives.... I definitely want a constructive relationship with her so that she sees me as a positive person in her building." In addition, Leah has very strong ideas about the qualities that she must possess as a professional educator. She places confidence, confidentiality, poise, and interest in one's field at the top of her list. Summarizing, she says, "There's a poise, an understanding of when to say things; when not to say things. You have to know how to work your system!"

When asked about her views on quality professional development, Leah expressed that she benefited most from experiences that lasted "over a long period of
time” rather than “one-shot workshops.” She saw the most effective training as providing her with applicable information such as “here’s the first step you need...to get yourself started.” In addition, Leah suggested that meaningful professional development should induce participants to closely examine themselves.

I think that a really good piece of professional development is understanding who you are as a person, and then who you are as a professional. Then, what goals do you have for yourself, and then how can you put those goals into what you’re doing for the whole program?

Leah viewed her National Board experience as a professional development opportunity even though, in her opinion, it left out important aspects of personal development. “I think that there’s a piece missing because I think that you need to know yourself personally before you can know yourself as a teacher.... I don’t think National Board has that piece because they really focus on teaching.” When asked about her reasons for seeking National Board certification, Leah responds that she went through the process in order to learn more about herself as a teacher. “I wanted to see whether or not I had all of those pieces in place. I felt that I did. I probably wouldn’t have attempted it if I felt that I didn’t.”

In addition to feedback, she sought to be validated as a quality educator. “I saw it as self-validation. With my personality, I don’t often give that to myself.” She pointed out that “When you receive validation in a school building, you receive it as a whole group. On Teacher Appreciation Days when “everyone receives the same mug with the same candy...everything is an across-the-board kind of thing.” She reflects,
When you’ve been working eight years, then this is how much money everybody makes when they’ve been working 8 years.... I don’t think teaching is something where you’re frequently told through forms of compensation or recognition that you have been successful.

Instead, Leah finds reassurance when colleagues look to her for advice such as:

How did you go about this? How would you deal with this parent issue?... I think that them coming to me or asking me to speak...in different situations is my reward. Most importantly, the students progress and affirm my part in their learning as well as their own.

Leah worries about the public’s negative perception of the education profession. While she believes that people who are closely associated with teachers in their everyday lives have a fair appreciation of the demands of teaching, she feels that many others are unaware. “I think there’s this other group of people who tend to think of teaching as an easy job.... How could that be? Come spend a day in my classroom and see how you do!” She reasons:

I think that society is putting pressure on education to provide many more tools for children. I think that in the past, the main job of education was...simply the knowledge piece. But now it’s the social piece and now it’s the emotional piece.

Alluding to the problem of professional burnout, she observes, “Many people [teachers] aren’t prepared for that [the intense pressures on teachers].” Her solution? The education community must increase positive publicity to help others more fully appreciate the teacher’s role. To do this, she suggests first strengthening support systems within schools, and then building relationships with businesses through business-school
partnerships. "All of those things are connected to the support," she says. Using the analogy of a big jigsaw puzzle, she illustrates her point. "You have all of these integral pieces to the puzzle of being a quality teacher." She concludes, "If one of those pieces is gone, your puzzle...falls apart."

**Lydia: Do Rock the Boat!**

Lydia is a National Board-certified teacher who has been teaching elementary school for the past nine years. Her teaching experiences include K-3 classrooms in both urban and suburban settings within a large Ohio school district. She is currently teaching a 2/3 multi-age class in a suburban setting within the same district. Teaching is a second career for Lydia following previous work as a nursing home administrator. "Although I can be successful in many areas, I feel that this career best uses the talents that I have at this point in time," she says.

From the time that Lydia was a child, she said, her family instilled in her the belief that she was capable of doing anything she chose to do. High standards and a strong work ethic were tools that Lydia used to accomplish her career goals. Leaning heavily on visual, kinesthetic, and interpersonal approaches to learning throughout her life, Lydia feels that her own learning style preferences have heavily influenced her classroom teaching style. "I was always a questioner. In Algebra, I raised my hand and said, 'I think this theory is wrong and I think I disproved it.' That's the kind of person I was!"

Throughout our interviews, Lydia demonstrated an enthusiasm for reflection and risk taking. She admits freely, "I always say what I'm thinking up front. I'm the person
who talks through everything.” Lydia often expressed frustration with other educators who were not as candid with their concerns surrounding educational issues.

When there’s really a problem, we don’t get to it. We don’t ever really sit down and say, “Well, what really is your problem? Why aren’t we working as a team? What’s the problem?” We never get to that. We’re all too polite. No one ever really gets down to those real nitty gritty ugly things that cause debate.

Following the first day of a recent in-service on reading methods she reflected her frustration that “No one said a word but me! I kept waiting. I didn’t mean to talk all the time, but no one else literally asked a question. None of us have ever heard it before. I don’t know how anybody can not have a question.”

Lydia describes herself as a risk-taker who is willing to breach difficult issues for discussion as well as try new ideas in her classroom practice.

I think a lot of people are scared. I see my personal role as being a risk-taker and providing a way for people to try it [new methods]. I say, “I’ll try it and then I’ll come back and tell you how it went.” So the person who’s not as much of a risk-taker can modify what I did and not worry about the failing part. I fail all the time. I just pick up and move on!

Lydia describes her teaching style as “hands-on,” with a great deal of cooperative and discovery learning opportunities. “I understand a child’s need to move around and to interact with others. I have had to work harder to understand children who learn in other modes and who tend to be introverted.” In her classroom, children work in a variety of individual and group formats. “My goal is to have children learning from each other. They really can!”
For the past few years, Lydia has served in various leadership capacities within her school district. She is currently acting as a math teacher leader, technology committee member, and a teacher advisor for the Eisenhower National Clearing House. A self-proclaimed idealist, realist, and facilitator, Lydia feels that her peers respect her because she is bold in stating when she does not like something.

I’m kind of sharp and short…but I never mean it negatively. This is the way that I feel about it, that’s the way it is. I am willing to listen to other people but they know that they’re not going to be able to walk all over me.

Conversely, Lydia prides herself on her ability to be fair with peers.

They know I don’t take sides based on personal whatever. Professionally, I stand on my own. I stand where I stand. Sometimes it’s with you, sometimes it’s with you [others]. But I don’t take sides just because you’re my friend or I’m not close to you.

Lydia holds strong ideas regarding the public’s current view of education:

It’s a love/hate relationship. They all respect teachers and they all remember their teachers. But particularly for the urban environment, it is such a negative thing. Everybody feels it’s their license to pick on urban teachers when they have absolutely no idea about what goes on down there and how hard it is. They blame everything on the (urban) teachers. Those same teachers go to the suburbs and do swimmingly!

Lydia feels that the media has had a major impact on forming the public’s “unfair” opinion of urban teachers.
I don’t want to go back into a true urban environment because I’m scared of reading the editorials in the paper…. Right now with all the test scores, the climate is really a teacher-bashing environment for urban areas…. I think that’s why we’ve lost 120-175 teachers this year in our school system.

In order to reshape the public’s perception of teachers, Lydia encourages teachers to “stop whining and complaining about working a few extra hours when we have a hundred and whatever days off a year!” She feels that educators need to increase positive publicity so that people realize that “teaching is an intellectual activity. People need to approach it with respect.” Publicity should demonstrate that a teaching professional is someone who is always learning, growing, assuming extra responsibilities, standing up and debating, and sharing ideas with others. “It’s not just a job that you go to every day.” She feels that organizations such as the NEA need to become known as organizations supporting higher standards for educators rather than simply as “some big liberal [political] organization.”

Lydia’s experience with teaching hasn’t always been so clear-cut. There was a time in her career during which she gave serious consideration to leaving the teaching profession.

I’d been teaching for 5 years and everybody kept telling me, “You’re not doing it right. You’re letting your kids talk!”…. I had a principal who said “Your kids seem to be learning, but I have no clue what you’re doing in there.”

As a result of these differing pedagogical viewpoints and lack of support, Lydia “dreaded” going to work every day. “It was really bad. I was ready to quit.”
A turning point for Lydia came just when she needed it most. She decided to apply for National Board certification because she heard that it “very much went along with the philosophy” of her master’s program.

I just said, “I’m going to throw it out there and see what these people say…. What do you say about my teaching?” And I did! That was for my own personal validation…. It was to see where I stand. I thought “Maybe I do need to change.”

After going through the year-long application process, she was not certain whether she would pass. “Then I passed!…That was a good feeling because it really kind of got my principal’s goat! Then she had no choice but to look at me in a different way….So that was really exciting!” Lydia warns, however, that the National Board propositions are built upon a certain philosophy of professional teaching.

You have to know that they have a certain philosophy. So if that’s not your values system, is it valuable to you? …. It happens to be my values system, so it makes it a lot easier…. National Board is looking for evidence of individualization, evidence that you’re using other resources than just the [teacher manual] book.

Had Lydia received validation of her teaching abilities previous to the assurance conferred by National Board certification? “I’m not into awards and recognition. I hate to say it. PTA Teacher of the Year chooses the teacher who the parent has a child in…often not close to a competent person.” Lydia proposes an alternative way for teachers to give meaningful validation to one another by suggesting “If teachers would talk more, they would recognize themselves in a different way.” She feels that the more common ways that teachers choose to validate themselves, such as with students’ test scores, “are
not the important things;” however, she recognizes the strong pressure by the public to be validated by these scores. She responds, “I personally don’t feel valid or invalid in that way.” Lydia encourages fellow teachers by telling them, “Do your best. Do what you know is good teaching! Because that [high test score] doesn’t mean that you did good teaching.”

**Mitch: What Makes a Teacher a Teacher?**

Mitch is a seasoned math teacher with nine years of experience educating both middle- and high school-age students. He entered the teaching field after studying philosophy for twelve years and achieving All-But-Dissertation (ABD) status in a university setting. Mitch reflects, “One of the reasons I became a math teacher in particular from philosophy is that I knew I could get an abstract subject matter across in a way that students would understand.” He elaborates, “Aristotle had an argument -- What makes a person a person? What makes a person unique? What does a person do that nothing else does? The ability to think!” He continues, “So to be the best possible person, you are as rational and use your rational abilities as much as possible. It’s a reasonable argument.”

Mitch feels that his primary objective as a teacher should be to develop his students’ minds. He shares, “There’s a drive for me personally to be a teacher because as a philosopher it is...the most important way that you can value someone else as a person.”

Mitch classifies himself as a “fairly old-fashioned” teacher. “I’m in front. I have the pen.” With a heavy emphasis on traditional teaching styles combined with the use of
technology, he focuses on preparing his students for college. He believes, "If they’re going to go to college, they’re going to have to learn how to sit and take notes, listen to a lecture, and learn that way.” He warns, “They can’t just approach that for the first time when they get to college.” The particular teaching methods that Mitch has adopted are heavily influenced by his graduate school studies in philosophy.

I left with a very strong opinion that I knew as well as anybody else that I had a conceptual background and a chain of reasoning that I can back up whatever I feel. Given that, and given all of the great philosophical arguments of why you should teach, I just developed math and developed subject matter.

While focusing on academics, Mitch values the strong relationships that he has developed with students over the years. However, in the past year he has moved from teaching in an inner-city district to the suburban district in which he and his family currently reside. He is uncomfortable noting that he has not yet developed what he feels are meaningful relationships with students in his new district. “I’m not established yet,” he says. “So I’m at a little bit of a loss; I really don’t have a group of kids.” He explains, “Particularly as they get older there are places where they [students] feel most at home. In a math classroom, or…whatever their particular interest is. I had those kids [in a previous school]. They mostly were calculus or advanced kids that became my kids.” He laments, “I don’t have any of my kids yet. I sort of miss that.”

When asked about the feel of his new school environment, Mitch responds that he is grateful for the support of administration which, he feels, is “infinitely better” than his previous district. Says Mitch, “When they say something, they mean it, as opposed to my past district.” He recalls the way in which his current administration handled the high
incidence of bomb scares this year. "They said, 'If you bring your book bags to school, you can't come in.' We sent 300 people home that first day." Mitch proudly concludes, "That's the way it's supposed to be! When you don't mean it, you don't say it....It's just nice to know that you'll be backed up and they're going to follow through.

With his new fellow teachers, Mitch is pleased with the "supportive" staff into which he has felt welcomed. He worries, however, about the lack of common planning time across departments. "I really think there ought to be a space each day for common planning time." He laments,

We try to get together as a course. Still everything isn't as well coordinated and isn't as well thought out as it could be if you had the time built into the day or the year to sit down as a department.

Recently, Mitch had the honor of participating in the first group of math teachers to apply for National Board Certification. His efforts were successful. "It was one of those things where I said, 'OK, I think I'm a good teacher. Let's find out!'" He clarifies, "Not that I would have thought that I wasn't a good teacher if I didn't pass." He believes that he was drawn to the certification process because it was a "national standard, completely independent" from the more subjective feedback to which he was accustomed from administration and students. In addition, Mitch suggests that his confidence was not as strong as it is now. "I'm ABD not by my own choice...When you're told you can't be what you're really interested in becoming, you doubt yourself." He recalls the lure of promised validation from National Board. "I had a need to measure myself. Really leftover from not being able to complete the dissertation." He concludes, "I needed to know from someone else, 'Yeah, you are a good teacher!'"
As a result of his own positive experience in applying for National Board, Mitch has become a facilitator who guides other National Board candidates attempting to become certified. In his candidate group, he helps teachers to become more reflective. He worries, "Most people don’t reflect at the level that National Board makes you think about things. If there’s one prejudice that National Board has, it’s for reflective teachers.” Mitch is philosophical about this “prejudice.” He shares, “There’s a class of teacher that’s called the natural teacher, who knows what to do in the classroom. It’s like they just know what to do...They aren’t thinking about things -- it’s natural!” He continues, “When they sit down to do National Board and they’re forced suddenly to articulate this, there’s a real problem.”

Mitch puzzles over a close personal friend who was unsuccessful in her attempt to become certified. “It just boggles my mind that someone that good didn’t pass.” Thinking about the candidates he supports, Mitch concludes, “Maybe they can learn how to do this, and some of them do. But some of them just can’t...because of their inability to express themselves.”

Looking back on his own experience of going through the National Board process, Mitch recalls the rigorous demand that he felt to teach reflectively. After introducing a math lesson he would sit down and ask himself, “Why did you do it?.... What were you thinking?” As a result, he feels that he is now able to make his rationale for teaching “more explicit.” Other benefits include the opportunity to receive validation of his teaching ability.
I say to the kids on the first day of school, “National Board is under my name on the syllabus.” I let them know what it is and I say,

There are going to be times this year when you say, “Does he know what he’s doing? Is he crazy?” And as a matter of a fact, yes I do. Furthermore, a group of people who have no knowledge of who I am took a look at my work and said “Yeah, he knows what he’s doing!”

Mitch asserts that teachers rarely receive consistent validation of their abilities. “The best way is when a kid turns around at the end of the year... and says, ‘The difference you made in my life was incalculable. I am a different person because you were my teacher.’” He maintains, “That’s the best way, but we’re working with kids. They just don’t do that!” While he periodically receives positive feedback from both parents and students, he worries, “So much of that is easily written off as ‘Oh, they like me.’ Of course they’re going to say good things!” He concludes, “It’s hard to get a true evaluation of how you are in the classroom.”

In addition to seeking validation of his teaching abilities, Mitch viewed National Boards as a vehicle for promoting the professionalization of teaching.

One of the things that encourages and enables people to be unprofessional as a teacher is that you don’t get anything more by being professional. There’s no advantage to working hard and doing a good job when the person next door is handing out dittos and watching TV in the afternoon! Why should I bang my head against the wall for the same money or less simply because they’ve been teaching for five years longer than I have?
Mitch holds that National Board provides badly needed recognition and rewards "good teachers." Even among fellow teachers, Mitch recalls issues of jealousy over recognition and money that arose surrounding his experience in becoming National Board certified. "There's a lot of professional jealousy. There's a lot of people isolated by the professional jealousy," he continues. "Unfortunately our country values money more than the profession." In the face of these adversities, Mitch continues to look toward the NBPTS to increase professional recognition and reward for teachers across the nation. "I believe that it will transform the educational system in America."

**Teachers Who Did Not Choose to Seek National Board Certification**

With 2,965 participants seeking National Board Certification during 1999, the vast majority of teachers in the United States do not yet choose to apply for certification (NBPTS, 1999). The following five participants agreed to share their professional belief systems, as well their perceptions of the National Board's certification of the teaching profession.

**Chad: An Educator's First Priority: Be a Good Role Model**

Chad is a fourth grade teacher currently in his sixth year of teaching in a suburban district inside central Ohio. "Teaching is my childhood dream," Chad proudly shares. "I love teaching kids and enjoy seeing that 'lightbulb' come on; there's nothing more rewarding in this profession!" He reflects on his upbringing which he believes strongly influenced him to become a teacher. "We were taught to do the right thing and always do
your best; no matter what. We were also encouraged to follow our heart and be whatever
we wanted to be.”

Chad recalls that as a child he enjoyed visual, kinesthetic, and interpersonal
modes of learning. As a boy, he attended Catholic school and believes that the structured
environment was very effective for learning. As a result of his positive schooling
experience, Chad believes that he has evolved into a teacher with a decidedly traditional
approach to education. “It’s very routine. I do traditional things like flashcards. I think
it’s important in fourth grade that they know their facts.” However, he counters, “I try to
be the facilitator as well as just being the lecturer... I like them to have a say in what’s
going on too. I try to do the hands-on things and games and activities.”

When speaking with Chad, one can’t help but gain an appreciation of his caring
approach to teaching. With students, he feels that being a good role model takes priority
over academic instruction. “I want to be a role model. Especially the way that families
are today. They’re broken up a lot.” He recalls,

One of my proudest moments was when a student came to school one day dressed
like me with a tie on. He said, ‘I’m Mr. ___ today.’ I had heard all of these bad
things about him, but when a kid comes and does that, you feel like you’ve shown
them something else about themselves... I feel that I had an impact on his life
and that’s what it’s all about!

He continues, “That’s the goal; that they’ll remember me for that... yet learn some things
along the way.”

Likewise, in his role with fellow teachers, Chad demonstrates a keen interest in
their well-being. “I’m there to listen, to help them out with some of their classes or
something on a personal level. I’m flexible and I’m there for whatever they want.” He warns that teachers must be careful not to become “so wrapped up in yourself that you’re too busy to take time to listen to what other people say.” As a result of this caring attitude, Chad received a “Golden Apple” attitude award from his peers during his early years in the district. “I enjoy knowing that fellow staff members and the students genuinely care about me — as I do them. The good old Golden Rule!”

Chad is concerned about the isolation in which many teachers currently work. “You close the door and you think you’re on your own.” Repeatedly, he mentioned his desire for increased dialogue and teamwork throughout the school district to build trust and understanding among teachers.

You hear people in your grade level say, “Well that teacher does it this way. That’s so off.” Yet when you talk to a person and see why they do it that way you understand them better... when you see where they’re coming from, you understand them.

He is concerned that as his district expands with entire grade levels concentrated in their own buildings, that teachers will not work as a team. “Each grade level now is too big. You need separate elementaries to really sit down and plan. You get more personalities in there.” Chad philosophizes, “I think if you really want change, it has to come from above and until that happens, I don’t see a lot of change happening.”

He expresses many feelings of disappointment when discussing interaction with the administration of his district. “There’s a lack of leadership... I’ve been disappointed with that.” He cites problems such as teachers not being informed of upcoming events, lack of people skills, and the inability of administration to boost morale. “It’s sad
because I like them as people. But as far as leaders, they’re more hands-off.” One of Chad’s greatest frustrations has been feeling that teachers’ opinions are not taken seriously when acting on leadership committees. “It’s hard being on committees... because you feel like you voice your opinion but nothing changes. It’s like things are set anyway but yet they want to make you feel like you have a say in what’s going on.”

Chad cited the example of current low morale in his own building. “I think this year the staff is separated... they had to pull teachers from a middle school concept and pull teachers from an elementary concept, so the two had a hard time meshing.” Other ongoing concerns include the pressure of proficiency testing on Chad’s fourth grade classroom. “Unfortunately, in fourth grade I feel we are overly driven by the (expletive) test! My role tends to be molded by what’s on the test. The media hype drives this role.” Chad feels the proficiency tests should not be used to judge teacher achievement. He believes the current system for teacher evaluation only compounds this problem. He argues the need for administrative evaluations to reflect “more than just coming into your classroom to observe for a half hour in the spring and fall.” Rather, he would like “honest feedback.” He observes, “I think some of the administrators we have are afraid of saying your bad points. So everything is ‘meets expectations’... I feel like if I weren’t meeting expectations, I don’t know if I would necessarily be told.”

So what type of meaningful validation would Chad like to receive from administration? “I think they could do more letting you know that you’re appreciated,” he says, happily recalling that at the beginning of this year his new principal gave each member of the staff a mum. Thinking back on past years, he reflects, “It’s not the usual.” He feels that administration should listen carefully and act on the concerns of the
teaching staff. "It's not 'let's sit down and talk about the problems of the school.' I think they feel vulnerable and they think it will turn into a complaining session.... Ignoring things isn't good, " he continues. "It just gets more people upset." As a result of the scarce supply of meaningful feedback, Chad is convinced that teachers are hungry for praise.

There's a teacher this year who does the 'woe is me' kind of thing...you go to the principal and say. "I'm doing a horrible job." Well of course you're going to the principal...because you want the principal to tell you "no."

Chad, however, empathizes with administrators in their complicated duty of recognizing teachers. "I'm all for recognition. But it depends on how you define excellence...they've got to be careful if it's the same person being talked about all the time." For example, "You feel like you're doing your job and you might not be as showy as somebody else. But yet they get the kudos because they're the types that show off their tail feathers." Chad asserts that this repeated form of narrow recognition is "detrimental and brings the morale low."

Chad does not view National Board certification as a personal vehicle for validating his abilities as a teacher.

I never really knew much about it...I also feel like I wouldn't get it, so why try?.... I think of myself on the staff and I think of other teachers. I don't think I'm horrible yet I don't think I'm the best.

Other reasons for not applying include a personal hesitancy to upstage other teachers. "I guess I don't like tooting my own horn. To go after something like that, I feel...I'd be like, 'Look at me! Look at me!' That's not me." Underscoring his beliefs, Chad adds,
"Just because somebody has their National Boards, to me, does not make them an excellent teacher." He says he would rather rely on the validation that he receives from students, parents, and his fellow grade-level teachers.

Current negative public perception regarding the field of education are a concern to Chad. "Unfortunately, the only thing you hear about education these days is that there was a shooting at school. I think they focus more on the bad things." Chad talks about a personal friend who teases him about having the summers off. "That saying, 'The three reasons for being a teacher: June, July, and August,' has always bugged me. I hate it. I just think it gives teachers a bad name." He summarizes his feelings about the general public:

Overall, I don’t think they have a bad opinion, but I don’t think it’s as esteemed. Unfortunately, because of the way society is today, people judge success by money. Because teachers don’t make a lot of money, they’re not as highly esteemed.

In order to address low morale issues, Chad suggests a number of ways that teachers may increase their professional status. "You have to be the one in charge. You have to be the professional.... You have fun, but it’s the way that you carry yourself around parents and the community." And finally, he adds, "I think doing your job and [doing] what you’re supposed to. Treating your kids with respect...You don’t go around bad-mouthing fellow staff members." His final admonition was, simply, "Respect one another."
David: Engaged Completely — the Mind, the Heart, the Hand

David is in his eighth year of teaching elementary school in a large metropolitan school district in Ohio. David’s proclivity for teaching, he believes, stems from his upbringing.

My parents value helping other people. They give their time and money to help others…my parents also have a deep trust in people. They believe that love can overcome all things negative. Patience and caring are also important and people should not tire of their work in helping others. These have all been values and beliefs that have influenced me as a teacher.

As a young boy David says he enjoyed the outdoors, literature, other cultures, and a wide range of people. “I had lots of experiences with people different from myself.” He remembers the modes of learning he would have most likely enjoyed as a child were natural, logical-mathematical and auditory learning styles. When asked if he feels that his own learning preferences currently influence his role as an educator, he responds, “Yes, I believe that my personal style of learning impacts my teaching methods. I feel most satisfied when I teach a lesson that I enjoy and it is also enjoyed by my students.” Further elaborating he says,

When I teach a lesson that is not my preferred learning style I am less excited even when students are successful at it…. I’m somebody interested in ceramics, music, philosophy, outdoors, and science. I have so many interests that in every lesson I teach, I try to have more than one thing happening.

David decided to become a public school teacher after working for a year in an outdoor education program. “My outdoor ed program taught me a lot about engaging
children completely — the mind, the heart, and the hand," he said. “It’s who I am.” He says his views on teaching were also heavily influenced by his graduate school advisor. When asked to share what he views as his primary teaching responsibilities, David replies, “It’s to engage students to ask questions and to enjoy learning so that they may be life-long learners…. My role with other teachers is to work together to create activities and an emotional environment where the children will be most able to grow.” He continues,

I very much think of the child not only as an academic intellectual but also an emotional being…. One of the things I work on the first year is emotional trust, emotional stability and excitement for learning, because some of them have just been ground into the dirt and they don’t feel good about themselves.

David views his role as an interdisciplinarian and continually strives to connect multiple concepts in his classroom.

I think good teachers have to be doing three things at once…. If I’m teaching science, I’m teaching language arts at the same time. If we’re going outside for extra recess, I have other reasons than just to go out and run. It’s emotional growth. It’s a chance for me to visit with one or two students, to walk beside them and talk to them about their day. There’s always more than one goal that I have at any one time.

David currently teaches fourth graders at an Arts Impact Alternative School that he says, “prides itself in being a downtown school in walking distance to museums.” He recalls his initial excitement about being offered a position in the alternative school:
I had done my student teaching here and considered it my dream school [assignment]. So when I was in my fifth year of teaching, somebody called me up and said, “There’s an opening at my school, will you come?” They remembered me from five years earlier and said they wanted me to come. I felt really pleased, really proud to accept that job.

David sees certain advantages of working in an alternative school. “The alternative school has a ‘building’ philosophy. When you have a building philosophy, then you can create an ambiance, an entire environment that the child will grow in and feel comfortable in.” He says, for example,

It’s a much more casual student-oriented [environment] in the sense that students are able to make more choices…we focus on the child at this school…the multiple intelligences…. There’s a lot of trust at our school that arts is educational…. Our school talks a lot about children as life-long learners. So the act of wanting to learn is as important as actually learning something -- the desire. Learning to communicate, having an opinion, are all things that we take very seriously at our school.

If a teacher does not buy into the philosophy that the staff is working to create, David feels simply that, “They should go.”

David says that the primary reason he opted to teach in the alternative school is because “I get to work intimately with other teachers…. In the isolated classroom, I’d go to the teachers’ lounges…and no one would want to talk about anything.” He continues, “I link teaching so much with being strong emotionally. The teacher’s inner world of stresses and emotions -- things that frustrate and excite them are so real in a classroom.”
David welcomes and seizes opportunities to dialogue with peers “to stabilize and bring out the positive emotional aspects and feelings of [being] a teacher.” He reflects, “The culture in my building is one that I can talk to somebody…. As difficult as that is, it’s really important to me because I’ve found the concept of a single classroom with 30 kids in it really lonely and confining.” David also enjoys the creativity that can result with team teaching. “You have the potential for synergy when you build on other people… This is an exhausting job! I need as much energy as I can get.” He warns, however, “There are some real pitfalls with team planning. The guy I’m working with now is just an elephant. He’s a bull to try to change his mind. I could never change his mind!” Regardless of the negatives, David insists “there’s still that face-time with other teachers. You can come up with ideals that are bigger than one person.”

When asked if David seeks validation for performing well as a teacher he responds, “I have some real strong beliefs about people and interacting with people…. I think it’s a strong sense of self-direction on that.” Recalling his recent graduate program experience to become a certified teacher, David asserts, “My security comes from my advisor in my master’s program and my teachers from my master’s program, books that I have read, and discussions with other teachers.” Having completed graduated studies at a seminary before entering the field of education, he believes he learned the importance of validation and “a lot of self-accepting.”

That might be one reason why I wanted to be with other teachers. In fact, I know it was now that I think about it. The only reason I wanted to have other teachers in the classroom was to have another adult saying “That’s a neat thing you did!”…. Because teachers are so isolated, I don’t know where they get validation
from...I think that teachers are wanting to be validated for the ideas they’ve come up with and how they’re teaching. I think that a lot of teachers slip into a mode -- a very isolated view of themselves. I think they stop asking that question.

When asked to what degree he feels that teachers validate one another, David answered, “I think it’s hard for teachers to validate each other because there’s a vulnerability that happens when you start to comment on other people’s teaching.... Teachers tend to stay away from that because it’s too personal, too private.” Likewise, David feels that administrators rarely provide meaningful feedback.

The evaluation I’m going through next week is when the principal is going to come and spend 15-30 minutes in my room. He already told me that he’s going to mark it satisfactory. He told me already and I’m trying to understand why that is.... He really doesn’t come into the classroom but very rarely.

David concludes,

When somebody is only working with a child for six months, how are you going to say whether or not that person did a good job or not? It’s like a factory-concept of education. “OK, I’ll have you come in in September, I’ll learn who you are by January; by June I’ll have you out of here!”

David also offered his views on the recent influx of teachers seeking National Board certification within his school and the larger region.

I’d say that some of the people doing National Board [are seeking] self-validation more than others.... It not only validates them as a teacher but it makes them more of a professional from somebody else’s perspective....I think it’s a validation in a more positive sense...they want to feel professional.
David postulates that an increased sense of professionalism may occur because “Now you are able to talk, teach, and you can say this is why I can do it so well, since I’m certified.” When asked to cite other reasons colleagues might choose to seek National Board certification, he offers several, including; hunger for academic challenge, self-improvement, monetary reward, and certification reciprocity across state boundaries.

Asked why he has not chosen to go through the National Board process himself, he explains,

When I started looking at it, I’d just come out of my masters program…. It seemed to me that it would be a repeat of what my masters was… but I’d have to commit all my time to it again to go through that self-review…. I just didn’t think it would improve me significantly.

Finally, David shares, “I did not want to get into a comparison with another teacher I work with who made it…. To me, it’s a race or a challenge.”

David is concerned about how the public currently views education in a negative light. Before becoming an elementary teacher, he viewed education as “a non-challenging narrow intellectual activity.” If he had applied a professional ranking to teaching, “It would be pretty low.” Comparing teacher education majors with business, science, or engineering majors, David says teaching was regarded very low on the rung of professional ranking. For this very same reason, David remembers his own unwillingness to even consider “getting into elementary teaching or teaching at all.” He feels that the national public believes that educators “should be able to do our job with few dollars.”
Even more of a personal concern in David’s life is the public’s view of urban education. He repeats the wide-spread misperception that,

The further away from the middle of the city you get, the better education is.... I think there’s a lot of people who think that the child in the urban classroom is a poorer quality of child. They have problems, they have issues that a school can’t really deal with. They’re poor, they’re hungry, they’re angry, they don’t have a parent. Their father is in jail or their mother is working late.”

Compounding the negative stereotype image further, David feels, is the public’s misperception that urban teachers are not as professional. “They’re poor teachers.”

In the face of these struggles, David feels that educators must help parents realize We actually do care about something that happens five years after [our] students leave.... If we connected with students outside of just our tiny six months worth of class and reconnected with that family somehow three to four years later, there’d be a sense that we’re not just a factory for kids going through the class: Chachunk, 30 kids done! Chachunk, 30 kids done!

Also, he suggests “If I were getting paid more, I think people would respect me more.... The public says, ‘Hey, man. If you get paid that much, you must do a good job!’”

Finally, David feels that there should be better screening of people who are becoming teachers. “Right now the perception is ‘Anybody could be a teacher.’”

**Jacqui: Strong in Her Beliefs**

Jacqui is in her sixth year of teaching first grade. She recently moved from an economically depressed school district in Southern Ohio to a middle class district in
Central Ohio's suburbs. She comes from a very large family in which her mother "always stressed the importance of going to work, even if you didn't feel like it." Her family expressed love and support openly while expecting the children to be "independent and tough." Adopting a similar philosophy in her classroom, Jacqui reflects,

I think that's how I view my students. I'm tough on them and don't let them whine or feel sorry for themselves. I expect every student I have to work hard and achieve as much as anyone else, regardless of his or her background. At the same time, I think I love and support all of my students.

Jacqui's father was a history teacher. "He used to quiz me on trivia all the time," she says. 'Who wrote the Constitution? What ships were sunk at Midway? When was the Battle of Hastings?'...I loved to learn facts and take tests!' She concedes, "I now find myself doing that with my students...in my classroom, I'm teaching all kids to be college students basically in 1st grade."

Jacqui has very strong convictions about her role as a teacher. "I think every educator needs to have a thought-out sense of who they are, what their job is, what their beliefs are, and how to get their kids to where they want to get their kids." She often worries about some of the teachers she has come to know.

I don't think a lot of teachers have gone through the thought process of why they are teaching.... If you went out and said, "How do you teach reading? Why do you teach it that way?" Half of them would give you a ton of reasons. The other half would have to think about it for a very long time, which is something they should have done before they were asked!
Personal responsibility is another of Jacqui's pet peeves. "There are a lot of people that show up to any job and say 'I'm here.' They don't take any personal responsibility for what they're doing." She believes that educators should have good moral backgrounds that enable them to be responsible for themselves. Excellent educators are "people who...know they're responsible for themselves and responsible for their actions. That's what it boils down to."

Not surprisingly, Jacqui has a very high sense of efficacy towards her work with students. "I want to take each child as far as they [he or she] can go...to make sure every child is going forward." As part of this overall teaching strategy, Jacqui works closely with parents. "I want to know every parent of every child I have in my room. I've visited houses before and I go to birthday parties sometimes and I go to the Buddy League basketball games...because every bit of information helps." To help keep track of each child's progress, Jacqui notes,

I have lists at home. I'll put them on my refrigerator sometimes. I know this sounds funny. I will list my students' names and what they need to work on on paper and put the list on my mirror. These are my kids who need to work on this. These are my kids who need to work on this.

Jacqui is deeply frustrated with the current lack of teamwork at her building. "I like more of a challenge...I like more of a team effort than I think is there. There's a lot of 'you do your thing, we'll do our thing.' If it coincides, it coincides. If it doesn't, it doesn't." Jacqui wishes instead that the staff would "work together as a team" to achieve the same goals. "I would love it if we were a team and basically every 1st grader in our building were like my 1st graders. That's the ideal situation and what I'd like to have."
She feels that working together as a team would help educators to overcome the stresses inherent in teaching. "You need to sound off! You need to share your ideas and feel like you’re being listened to. I don’t think we have a lot of that going on."

Jacqui recalls how well the staff in her previous school worked together. It made life so much easier because we’d sit down and say, “OK, this is what we’re doing in reading. Are you going through these steps? Yes. Having any trouble?” The process was positive because we had a lot of interaction and a lot of talking…. I really don’t see any of that going on right now at the building I’m in.

Jacqui’s frustration finally peaks,

I’ve been at this school for three years and there’s someone in my own grade level who has never once talked to me ever about anything dealing with curriculum and education. Not once…this is a true story. I went in during planning to talk to this individual and said, “I want to ask you a question. They said, “Let me tell you what just happened.” So they talked to me for fifteen minutes about this dentist whose dog died. And literally, I wanted to ask a question about curriculum. At the end, they said, “I don’t have time right now, I’ve got to go!” She had 15 minutes for the dentist’s dog! That is a true story and I will never forget it.

Without much professional staff discussion, how does Jacqui receive feedback or validation for her hard work? “Sometimes you’ll have parents do that, which is wonderful. I had some parents last year who made my day because they recognized that I was putting forth the effort.” However, Jacqui observes,

For the most part, if education is a business, you have no one in the business saying you’re doing a good job…. I think if you’re a good teacher, a bad teacher,
basically you’re just treated the same. There is no incentive or rewards program for doing an outstanding job at all. I wish there was.

Continuing to vent her feelings, Jacqui says, “Yes, you get that internal reward and yes, you get that self-satisfaction of knowing you did everything you could… I think it comes down to that personal responsibility that keeps me motivated.” In order to receive meaningful feedback or recognition, she believes, “You have to have people know what you’re doing in the classroom. No one knows what you’re doing in the classroom. They really don’t!”

When asked why Jacqui has not chosen to seek National Board certification, she responds,

I’m working on my master’s [degree] right now. I just don’t have time…. Even if I did … I don’t know how beneficial it would be to me personally as a teacher. As a matter of fact, I think sometimes those things take time away from your teaching.

However, she states wishfully, “I would like to do it [apply for National Board certification] just to pat myself on the back and say ‘I’ve got it!’”

Jacqui notes that her fellow teachers do not have a forum for recognizing one another. “We’re lucky if we get a 15 minute meeting together once a month.” Even more disheartening, she has sensed a level of “animosity within education between the different (grade) levels.” She says she would like it if “teachers in the elementary and middle and high school traded places” in order to gain an appreciation of the hard work and preparation that goes into each teacher’s job.
Finally, Jacqui is concerned that the administration is unable to provide meaningful evaluation and feedback. She observes,

I don't feel like they really know much about what we're doing.... You have a superintendent, curriculum director, principal, vice-principal and counselor... if they're in your room, they're scheduled to be in there because they have to put in a paper to the superintendent. But they really have no idea what's going on in the class. For the most part, they're really more concerned with discipline, things like that.... [None of them] has experience teaching K-3.

Jacqui believes that school evaluation teams should include teachers in the evaluation and reward process as one possible solution. She elaborates, "Teachers in a school system know which teachers are putting forth a great deal of effort... I think a team of people, including administrators, could say 'Thank you, you've done a great job.'" Jacqui suggests that providing educators with specific suggestions and praise could make a large difference in teacher performance.

Jacqui frequently alludes to her frustration with the public's view of education. I know if you would ask most people about an accomplished professional they'd say, "Oh, they make 80 grand a year".... Nine times out of 10 you're going to get from the general public, "Oh teachers, look at those hours that they work... you make too much money and you get off in the summer."

Jacqui counters, "I stay until 6 or 7 every night. I'm in there two or three hours extra. I put in a lot of time. It's very frustrating to me to hear somebody go off on my profession when I work so hard." She continues,
You feel like you’re less of a professional because the next-door neighbor knows how to read so they think they’re an expert on teaching reading. They think that if you teach first grade, that’s the extent of your knowledge -- the knowledge of a first grader!"

Jacqui feels that the media contributes to the problem by viewing the teaching profession in a negative light. She feels that in order to increase teachers’ professional status, educators must learn how to defend teaching beliefs and methods effectively. She shares, “Whatever you’re going to do, if you’re going to do it well, you need to be ... strong in your beliefs.”

Finally, Jacqui also thinks that educators must engage one another in professional dialogue on a regular basis. The end result, she believes, will be activism and empowerment within the teaching community. “That is what my job is. That’s what makes teachers accomplished!”

Paula: “You Don’t Teach Reading — You Teach Josh!”

Paula is a veteran elementary school teacher nearing 30 years of experience in a rural school district. She excitedly explains, “I am motivated by the joy of teaching...My mother always wanted to be a teacher. She ‘played’ school with me from my first memories. At a very young age, I just assumed that being a teacher was a wonderful way to live.” While Paula has worked with a variety of children in grades K-6, she has spent the last “20-something years” working with first graders. “I love first graders’ enthusiasm and willingness to try whatever!”
As a young girl, Paula recalls being taught the value of “personal responsibility, honesty, caring, a puritan work ethic, and empathy towards others.” All of these values were conveyed “in an atmosphere of trust, love, and joy.” Paula creates this same environment with her own students. She views her primary role with students as “making every child in this room think they can do anything…that they are wonderful human beings and a very bright person, no matter who they are or what they turn in.” She remembers recently encouraging a struggling child. “When you see something they’ve done and you say, ‘That is the best idea I’ve heard for three weeks!’ They smile and they know that the next time they have something like that, they’re going to write more or try harder.” She is confident that within her own classroom she “can control the atmosphere of the room so that they know that this is a loving, accepting place.” Paula confides that she often worries about the home lives of her students. “Sometimes I look at these little people and think ‘What was their morning like? Are they thinking about dad yelling at mom, or whatever?’” She concludes, “You can’t control what they bring to school with them.”

While Paula’s commitment to her students’ emotional well-being has remained a constant priority throughout her career, she feels that she has remained flexible in her approach to teaching methods. “When I first began teaching, I used much more directed teaching methods. With years and experience, I have learned to allow my students to have more of a discovery, personally-owned way of learning.” She elaborates, “I think people who are ‘teachers’ teach the children and not the books. You don’t teach reading, you teach Josh.” Pausing for a moment, she adds, “I think that’s almost an inborn thing because I have seen people who go through college…but they’re not really teachers.”
She continues, “When I think of reading groups 20 years ago and the reading groups now where we write and talk about the story and laugh about the story, it’s almost diametrically opposed!” Paula credits the professor of a local university for her change in philosophy while she was pursuing her master’s degree. She recalls the professor admonishing her “Every once in a while, at least twice a day, I want you to stop and say, ‘Why are you doing this? Why are the children doing this?’ She continues,

I really try to do that… I think that’s reflective…. Because of my age, I look at a child as a person who is developing; not as a person who has to be this tomorrow or that next week. I think [students’] learning is a process, and I don’t think I believed that at first. I don’t think I even thought about that.

As part of an on-going desire to learn more about her teaching, “You try to keep up on the journals and anything anybody will give you to read,” she says. She is not impressed, however, with the lack of professional dialogue between educators within her school district.

We have very little communication or ideas going back and forth between grade levels…. We come in here and we close our doors and we’re on our own. I would love to have a small group of people who talked together about real educational issues. We just don’t get to talk enough with our peers. Then when we do, the people who are very vocal take over and they’re not real interested in some of the things that we want to talk about.

At the other end of the spectrum, she notes,
Bitching about stuff becomes a way of life. Teachers walk into this building yelling, “That parking lot is slick! My floor’s not clean. My kids are stupid!” They walk right in the door to tell you how horrible life is every morning!

Stopping short of condemnation, she concedes, “A lot of that I think is due to stress. I think our job is very stressful. I think that to a lot of people, talking, joking or whatever, is a release.”

In past efforts to encourage meaningful dialogue in her building, Paula recalls,

A long time ago, maybe 15 years ago, I tried to have a group meet before school. I copied articles from the current teacher magazine. I asked everybody to read it and then we were going to talk. I just thought that would be so wonderful and I was so prepared. I got in there and introduced the subject and shared the first comment about it. The first teacher that talked said, “If this isn’t something I can use in my classroom, then I’m just not interested.” Two other teachers said, “I don’t have time!” And another, “I didn’t have time to read the article.” That was it! It was done!”

Paula defers, “I don’t think I’m much of a leader. I’m not a follower but I’m also not a leader... I think to be a leader you have to be able... to say ‘This is something that you ought to know!’ I just can’t do that. I just can’t.”

Over the years, Paula has developed strong beliefs regarding how to promote dialogue in schools. She feels that teachers could learn a great deal from one another “if you trusted each other enough.” She adds that if trust were in place,
You’d be able to say “I tried this math lesson with them today. I thought the kids all knew it. We did a paper. Look at this! None of them knew any of the answers…. That person can come back to you and say ‘Hey, try this.”

In this type of environment, “You could share failures and successes.” Paula warns that time must be provided for educators to open up. “You can’t walk into somebody’s room and have a meaningful conversation in five minutes. That’s all we ever have!” In order for changes to occur, Paula feels “You’d have to have somebody in a leadership role to make things run a little more smoothly.” She is certain that systemic efforts toward dialogue “have to come from the top.”

Over the past 20-plus years, Paula has had very different experiences under the leadership of various building principals. When speaking of her current principal, she shares, “I’m satisfied that anytime you ask him to do anything or you need something, he always remembers. He follows through for you. I think he stands up for you if there’s a problem with parents.” However, she longs for a principal more willing to discuss “professional things” with the teachers.

Especially if I have a question about something that’s going on, like I don’t think this is the best way to do something, I feel like he is defensive about that… I feel like he doesn’t either trust me or doesn’t feel that we can talk like just people on something professional.

She fondly recalls a previous principal who had groups meet before and after school as well as during the summer. “He bought books and gave them to his staff and everybody read them and commented.” She concludes, “I just think we miss out not doing that.”
When asked about her feelings on National Board certification, Paula comments, "When I first heard about it, I thought 'Wow, I'm going to do it! I think that would be wonderful!'" She adds, "If I had known about this ten years ago, there's no doubt in my mind at all that I would try to do it whether I succeed or not." She views certification as a form of validation similar to the prestige of a doctor undergoing evaluation of his ability to employ a new medical technique. "It's a requirement beyond your certification and licensing in one state. It's a step beyond something you had to pass."

On the other hand, Paula expressed frustration with the current teacher evaluation system used in her building. "We use the principal's observation and that's about it...I never get any feedback...I never have somebody come in and visit for awhile and later sit down for any real discussion." Expressing frustration, she reveals, "I always feel kind of cheated when I walk out. There is nothing...there isn't a deep knowledge of what I am doing or not doing. It is just kind of superficial." In contrast, she feels that National Board certification offers teachers a genuine and meaningful opportunity to say, "I can do as well as the best teachers."

Paula is deeply disappointed with the lack of respect accorded to American teachers throughout history. "Teachers used to live in peoples' houses. They didn't pay them. They were just somebody who they would give food to. It's just the way in our country. I think they [teachers] are more respected in some other countries." Noting that her husband is also a teacher, Paula adds, "I don't think they respect us. In a group of people that we don't know too well, where [her husband] says, 'I'm a teacher.... There is a definite reaction. It is 'Oh, he's not quite as important as this lawyer here.'" She reasons, "Because the money's not there." She perceives that teachers as a whole feel
“I’m in my room by myself; I work really hard, I try the best I can. Then I pick up the paper every single day and read that children can’t learn anything because of me.” She pauses for a moment,

I have a feeling that the media say things to be outlandish…. I think there is a discrepancy in what I hear. I think in all the years I taught, I might have heard four people say they didn’t think somebody did something quite right in the teaching profession. Basically, they seem to know that we care and try the best we can.

Paula suggests that in order to improve the media’s perception of teachers, educators must act like professionals. She admonishes other teachers to “Stop belittling other teachers or your job in the community.” She feels that this is “self-destroying behavior.” She concludes, “To act like a professional, you’re proud of what you do and you’re competent and secure in what you do. You can say ‘I do a good job. I work hard! My kids succeed.’”

Tess: “Power to Influence Others”

Tess is a fifth grade teacher with 18 years of experience in her rural/suburban school district. She credits growing up in a family of seven for teaching her the value of “respect, trust, and honesty,” which she applies daily in her teaching. “If I want respect and trust from my students and I want them to learn from my example and influence, then I should start by treating them the way I want to be treated,” she says. Tess feels that she came to be a teacher quite naturally.
I was the oldest in this large family so I had lots of experience helping the rest of the clan. I think that is why I am a control-type person and that is reflected in my teaching style. I want that power to influence others.

She recalls, “My dad always said I would be a great teacher, so that influenced my thinking.”

As a child, Tess remembers sitting in classrooms with teachers who expected children to learn primarily through auditory modes. “Everything was told to you and you memorized it…. I am not like that in my teaching. I believe that I try to teach in all three of the most important ways: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.” She adds that she provides opportunities for her children to engage in cooperative learning with plenty of visual and hands-on activities.

While academics are a priority to Tess, she puzzles over her changing role as a teacher, worrying that her influence on her students’ lives is growing smaller.

I think it is more difficult to get close to students today. That is influenced by parents who want us to fix [do] everything for them…. We cannot build on relationships with students when so many come to school with such baggage.

Venting frustration, Tess adds, “I’d say the majority of our district thinks that we are the raisers of their children...we are counselors more and more.”

To help ease the ever-growing demands on classroom teachers, and enable them to focus more on quality teaching, Tess asserts that parents must step in.

If parents became more involved in their kids’ lives and helped to control these interruptions...it would help us as teachers to really make a difference.... That’s
the biggest problem and that sums up the way to solve a lot of problems that we as teachers have.

She recommends to parents more family time and more of an emphasis on the importance of schooling.

Within her own building, Tess is pleased with the teamwork and unity of her staff. “We have good interaction. We all team-teach within our grade level and it seems to be that right blend of a very sequential structured person to the global teacher.” She shares, “I think there’s a lot of interaction as far as understanding skills and the same philosophy within the building.” Interestingly, this shared philosophy has been created by the teachers through site management in which teachers are given authority to manage and monitor various aspects of their school. “I think that when we have input into the curriculum, that helps kids have success.”

However, there are still areas in need of improvement within the school. According to Tess, the staff feels that the current principal is “still wet behind the ears and does not have enough experience.” Compounding that problem, the teachers in the building have “a lot of experience.” Lamenting a pattern with which she has become familiar over the years, Tess reflects, “Communication is building to help him improve and to help us compromise a little more too…. By the time we get it solved, he’ll have moved up the ladder!”

Throughout our conversations, Tess expressed concerns about her district’s evaluation system utilized to assure teacher effectiveness.

I always felt…observations that came from principals were intimidating…. When the principal comes in the classroom, we never do what we normally do…we
show the best part of our lesson, the best part of who we are as a teacher...that’s not a good assessment.

Instead, Tess feels that “observation by peers as opposed to a principal who hasn’t been in the classroom for a long time” would be more beneficial. Says Tess, “One of the things that would be really helpful to other teachers is to have the opportunity to observe within their own team.” Recalling her grade level team members, Tess realizes, “We have taught together for 14 years and I have never spent one minute in their classrooms watching them!” She concludes,

I think that it would make me feel like I’m doing this right or this wrong if I could see someone within my own grade level teaching the same thing that I’m teaching across the hall. I think that would be good for me and good for them.

When asked how she has sought feedback regarding her teaching methods, Tess cites graduate courses she has taken, as well as her own experiences.

The courses I’ve taken keep me up to date on the way kids learn and what kids need and why they’re different than ten years ago...courses and just the experience of the kids and working with other teachers and saying “Why isn’t this working?”

Tess values being open to “seeing both the positive and negative side of what worked within a lesson.” She says she typically finds time for reflection every day. “I usually wait and look back on it as a whole picture at the end of the day.”

Tess feels that teachers seldom look outside of themselves for validation of their teaching abilities. “I’m not sure I see that very often -- other teachers going to a resource or a person or a place to find out that they’re doing a good job.” She worries about a
teacher in her building who is using many different ideas with different children. "I think she knows she’s doing a good job. I hope she knows she’s doing a good job." For herself, Tess recalls two instances in which she sought validation for her teaching ability. "Getting my master’s degree is my own personal validation. I struggled to get it and it makes me feel good to ‘brag’ to people that I have a masters...I guess other than that, just having good evaluations is enough for me."

When asked why she has not chosen to seek National Board certification, Tess responds that going through the process "would not benefit me at all as a teacher...I just wouldn’t need to jump through the hoops." However, she can think of a few other teachers in her building who are "motivated by that kind of thing." She clarifies, "Not that they’re horn tooters. But they’re motivated.... One more drive, one more thing that they could put on their plate."

She adds that others may seek National Board certification possibly because teachers have received high levels of negative publicity.

Everything’s a teacher’s fault. It’s in education where the problems in society are.... I don’t see the majority of the community out there seeing us as effective teachers. The problems within the schools and possibly within the family are always blamed on the teacher.... More and more you hear parents say “It’s your job to do that.” And it has become our job. We’ve taken on a lot more roles and responsibilities than even five years ago because it’s easier for us to just go ahead and do it.... At our school site, that’s a big philosophical thing we talk about all the time.
How does Tess feel that educators should address this dilemma? “One thing I think would help would be having evaluations within our contract that weed out the bad teachers...they have brought a bad reputation to us as teachers. They’re still teaching and we can’t get rid of them.” Her final recommendations include: acting as a professional by having adequate content knowledge, experience, openness to change, and embracing a solid foundation of values and morals.

Chapter 4 Summary

Chapter 4 has demonstrated the uniqueness and intricacies of participants’ belief systems. A wide variety of patterns and distinctions have emerged across participants’ stories. Even within study groups, participants have shared the unique beliefs, attitudes, and values that they hold toward their professional roles. While different perceptions exist across participants and groups, important similarities have also appeared in the narrative analyses.

The following chapter, Chapter 5, will enable the researcher to make comparisons across participant cases in order to draw important conclusions and implications for better understanding groups of participants’ belief systems.
CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVES

Overview

Chapter 5 presents a more traditional approach to analyzing qualitative data. Through use of Polkinghorne’s *analysis of narratives* technique (1995), the researcher compared data *across* cases to illuminate the most significant themes and patterns in participants’ belief systems. Rather than viewing participants’ stories in their entirety as was done during the *narrative analysis* phase, this section focused on isolating and categorizing significant findings while taking into consideration their original context. In order to do this, data was separated and clustered by conceptual groupings (Huberman & Miles, 1994a) that later became Chapter Five’s categories and sub-categories. Analysis of narratives served as an effective tool for helping to understand patterns in these particular educators’ beliefs, attitudes, and values toward their professional roles.

In order to begin the *analysis of narratives* phase, it was necessary to approach the data corpus in a distinctly different manner than during the narrative analysis phase. Having already become familiar with individual participant’s stories during the narrative analysis phase, analysis of narratives then required the researcher to review each participant’s *master chart* created during the narrative analysis phase. After re-reading
all 15 master charts, a *categorical list* of repetitive themes was developed and organized into major categories and supporting sub-categories. From these categorical lists, each major category was recorded on a *cross-comparison list* to which relevant sections from participants' master charts were cut and attached. Through the use of master chart sections, which included *data provenience* (Huberman & Miles, 1994a), or reference to page numbers of original transcripts from which quotes were taken, participants' ideas were easily located for later reference when writing analysis of narratives. In total, 31 discreet categories emerged on 31 separate cross-comparison lists. From there, categories were reorganized and collapsed through a long series of data reduction (Huberman & Miles, 1994a) to determine appropriate major and sub-categories. The need to reorganize categories extended even into the actual writing of the analysis of narratives.

Next, an *overview table* was created, entitled *Table 5.1: Data Categories and Sub-categories for Analysis of Narratives*. Table 5.1 was used to guide the structure of Chapter 5 and evolved into five major sections. It is important to note that each section was generated inductively through topics of discussion, which participants repeatedly emphasized. These sections were structured to demonstrate a cross-comparison of participant belief systems in a roughly sequential order: beliefs [Key Influences on Teaching], attitudes [Attitude Toward Profession & Tensions of Teaching], and values [NBPTS Experience & Implications for Change]. Definitions of the five major categories and sub-categories are provided in these sections.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Influences on Teaching</th>
<th>Attitude Toward Profession</th>
<th>Tensions of Teaching</th>
<th>NBPTS Experience</th>
<th>Implications for Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Values</td>
<td>Reasons for Becoming a Teacher</td>
<td>Student Needs</td>
<td>View of Core Propositions</td>
<td>Teacher Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Experiences</td>
<td>Qualities of an Accomplished Educator</td>
<td>Work Environment</td>
<td>Rationale for Applying</td>
<td>Teacher Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Learning Styles</td>
<td>Classroom Methods</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Rationale for Not Applying</td>
<td>Career Aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Role-Models</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>Professionalizing Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Work/Schooling</td>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Training</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Validation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons to Remain a Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Data Categories and Sub-categories for Analysis of Narratives
Finally, each section began by consulting the appropriate cross-comparison list in addition to participants' 33 original transcripts. As during the narrative analysis phase, sections from participants' original transcripts were often referenced, to identify significant categories and themes — only this time across cases.

**Key Influences on Teaching**

Over the course of the study, participants described six influences they believed had a major impact on their decisions, both to become educators and to conduct their teaching in a particular manner. These influences included: strong childhood and family values; preferred learning styles; teacher role models; previous work and schooling, and undergraduate training influences that strongly impacted their current, day-to-day professional beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Table 5.2 demonstrates the key influences and respective participants.
Table 5.2: Absence/Presence of Data in Sub-category (Key Influences on Educator)

Family Values

In their responses, participants believed that their family upbringing definitely influenced the type of teacher they became. They recounted numerous childhood lessons on education that were taught by family members. Phil, Mindy, Alicia, Leah, David, and Tess all shared their parents' primary emphasis on helping others. Phil, for example, referred to his family's "unspoken premium of being a helpful servant to mankind." Similarly, David spoke of his parents' lesson that one "should not tire of...helping others." Mindy shared her mother's "Golden Rule" approach: "Treat people the way you want to be treated."
Others recalled being taught the value of high standards and hard work. Paula, a veteran teacher, said she learned “personal responsibility...[and] a puritan work ethic” as a young girl. Likewise, Jacqui cited her mother’s emphasis on hard work “even if you don’t feel like it.” Lydia related her most memorable childhood lesson, “I am capable of doing anything that I choose to do.” She credited a strong work ethic and high standards for paving a successful career, first in business and then in education.

Finally, a general sense of respect for education permeated most participants’ childhood recollections. Catrine vividly remembered her parents’ emphatic desire for her to be the first family member to attend college. “In our home, there was no question about going on to higher education, and no question about the sacrifices they (my parents) were willing to make to help us succeed.” Phil, Leah, and Jacqui grew up in households with parents who were educators. Leah recalled, “There was always something new to learn and be interested in. Everyone was always attending classes of some sort.”

As group and individual discussions continued, it became more and more apparent that early family values, training and beliefs had had a profound and lasting influence on the educational and career choices, ultimate professional directions, and current practices of the study participants.

**Childhood Experiences**

Many of the participants referred to key childhood experiences that they felt later impacted their teaching approach. Some even reported the influence of “playing school” during childhood. One of the educators, Trina, described a “neighborhood school” that
developed on weekends and summers in her backyard. She recalled the pleasure of interacting with the broader community through this experience. Likewise, Paula mentioned her earliest memories of playing school with her mother. From these experiences, Paula reflected, “I just assumed that being a teacher was a wonderful way to live.”

One participant, David, particularly relished the outdoors as a young boy. He found that playing outdoors in fields and woods generated an enduring personal interest in science and the environment which he later carried into the classroom as a teacher. He credited his church’s strong emphasis on literacy for developing his own childhood literacy appreciation.

For two research participants, school childhood experiences were major stabilizing factors at an early age. Tanya revealed that her early years were filled with “difficult experiences” such as economic hardship. She specifically recalled the “caring and influential” teachers in her life who regularly made certain that there were “Christmas presents under the tree” for her and her younger siblings. Ken also credits his elementary teachers for helping to develop his self-esteem.

**Preferred Learning Styles**

Gardner’s theory of *Multiple Intelligences* (1983) asserts that human cognitive competence is embodied in a set of “abilities, talents, or mental skills” that all normal individuals possess and utilize to differing degrees (Walters & Gardner, 1984, p.53). The framework of multiple intelligences, often referred to as *learning styles*, was an effective tool for identifying particular abilities, talents, and mental skills possessed by participants.
during their childhood and adult lives. Table 5.3 presents participants’ views of their most favored childhood learning styles. This information was compiled during the grounded survey portion of data collection, in which participants were asked to reflect on the effects that their preferred modes of learning might have on their teaching.

Trina recounted, “As a child, I learned best kinesthetically. I loved hands-on activities. This is the style of learning that has impacted my teaching the most.” Likewise, Tanya shared, “As a child the modes of learning that I enjoyed the most were visual, kinesthetic, and logical-mathematical. I know this style of learning affects my teaching.”

Phil categorized his learning style as primarily auditory and interpersonal. “I teach in the same way, yet I realize others learn via different modes. I try to incorporate other styles to fit the clients I serve.”

David was quick to relate his childhood learning style to his current teaching approach. He shared, “I believe that my personal style of learning impacts my teaching methods. I feel most satisfied when I teach a lesson that I enjoy and it is also enjoyed by my students.”

Clearly, many of the participants viewed their childhood learning styles as having a significant impact on how they approach their teaching.
### Participants’ Preferred Learning Styles (Gardener, 1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ Preferred Learning Styles</th>
<th>NBPTS Candidate</th>
<th>NBPTS Certified</th>
<th>Regular Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Mindy</td>
<td>Phil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>⊗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesthetic</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical-mathematical</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
<td>⊗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ⊗ Most Favored
- ⊘ Secondary
- ◎ Tertiary
- ⊙ Not Reported

### Table: 5.3: Participants’ Preferred Learning Styles

**Teacher Role Models**

When asked to recall the most memorable qualities of the teachers they respected as young children, all participants were eager to respond. Some referred to their favorite teachers from long ago by name. Paula said, “Her name was Claire Hoffaker.... She was so enthusiastic about her art.... She’d bring pictures and talk about them...and [would always remember to say]...‘everybody’s project was wonderful!’”
Like Paula, Trina remembered an elementary teacher who utilized her preferred style of learning and ultimately became Trina's teaching model. "She used lots of hands-on [methods], where everyone else [other teachers] basically read and lectured." Trina remembered her teacher was a world traveler who regularly returned with souvenirs to educate her students. "She believed in us. We could feel it."

Likewise, David reflected, "They've all been sensual teachers in the sense that they liked to touch things.... They were engaged physically with the world!" Leah recalled the vibrant personality of her high school art teacher. "He was a very outstanding artist...but also very motivated...to do things outside of his [regular] job because he was interested in it. That made a very big impression on me of how a teacher should be."

Notably, nearly all of the participants recalled the positive impressions left by educators upholding high standards, knowledge of content area, and a caring and personalized approach toward students.

**Previous Work/Schooling**

A number of the participants said their previous work and schooling experiences had influenced their approaches to teaching. While the majority of participants entered the teaching field directly after graduation from college, six members of the study had pursued other career options following graduation.

Two participants, Alicia and Leah, obtained certification in the field of psychology as well as education. After working at a special-needs school upon graduation, Alicia quickly determined that she would pursue her teaching certification by
completing an additional year of graduate school. By comparison, Leah graduated with a teaching certificate and later decided to finish her school psychology certificate and pursue a school-counseling career. Both women entered a doctoral program in leadership at their local universities.

Phil graduated with dual degrees in journalism and education. After working for several years as a news reporter, he ultimately accepted a position teaching English in the Chicago Public Schools. He later pursued his administrative certificate and subsequently entered a doctoral program. David returned to graduate school to pursue his teaching certificate after attending seminary and later working in an outdoor education program. He admitted to having a "strong sense of self-direction" and reflected, "I've spent a lot of my years thinking about what I find important in life."

Finally, Mitch and Lydia both began working in different fields before becoming public school teachers. Mitch pursued doctoral studies in philosophy and served as a graduate teaching assistant for a number of years. Lydia joined the business world before later deciding to pursue teaching.

**Undergraduate Training**

Most participants had mixed feelings toward their undergraduate teacher preparation programs. While Mindy was generally complimentary with respect to the teaching methods modeled for her by professors, other responding participants offered suggestions for improving their undergraduate programs.

Paula and Tess recommended that education majors be given earlier and more frequent field experience opportunities. Paula suggested, "I would like to see them
[professors] having college students spend more time in the classroom than at the university...being really involved rather than this fake teaching experience.” Tess supported Paula’s suggestion. “I think with experience, you take on a different perspective....I think you need to stick them [student teachers] in the classroom early on; not wait until they’re seniors.”

Chad would have liked more formal content-knowledge training during his undergraduate years, but instead received mostly hands-on activities. Paula agreed that undergraduate schools need to enhance their teacher preparation programs by instilling greater content knowledge in students.

Trina said she would have respected her undergraduate instructors more if they had acquired more years of classroom teaching experience before becoming professors. She said she wished that her professors had focused more on developing students’ reflective skills during early training.

**Summary of “Key Influences on Teaching”**

- Participants shared that family values such as high standards, an emphasis on giving, and a general sense of respect for education, profoundly influenced how they formed their professional identity.

- Participants viewed memorable childhood experiences as helping to inform the way in which they interacted with students socially and emotionally.

- Participants believed that their personal childhood learning styles greatly influenced their pedagogy.

- Participants held specific teacher role models whom they strived to emulate.
- Participants’ work and schooling experiences prior to entering the education field continued to influence their views and behaviors toward their professional roles.
- Participants’ undergraduate training experiences seldom met expectations for adequate preparation.

**Attitude Toward Profession**

During both private and group interviews, each participant shared his/her attitude, or distinct beliefs and feelings, toward the profession. These comments were audio-recorded, transcribed, and studied to aid the researcher in understanding participants’ feelings regarding their professional role. While there were many distinctive philosophies shared, several common themes emerged. These themes were grouped as sub-categories in order of frequency in Table 5.4 and represent common issues or concerns discussed across participants. Following Table 5.4 are participants’ own comments elaborating on these issues.
Table 5.4: Absence/Presence of Data in Sub-category (Attitude Toward Profession)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude Toward Profession</th>
<th>NBPTS Candidate</th>
<th>NBPTS Certified</th>
<th>Regular Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for Becoming a Teacher</td>
<td>Kea</td>
<td>Mindy</td>
<td>Phil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualities of an Accomplished Educator</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Methods</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Remaining a Teacher</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons for Becoming a Teacher**

Most participants found it easy to recall their original rationale for becoming educators. Alicia, Mindy, Phil, and Tess, for instance, each professed that their desire to teach stemmed from a passion for making a profound difference in the lives of others. Tess shared, “I want to be the one to make a difference in their [students’] lives...to make a difference in the way they think and behave. Tess freely admits to the added motivation of summers off and a strong retirement plan in public education. Mindy said
she also is motivated by a desire to help students progress academically, as well as in
other areas. Alicia offered her perception on the type of person who typically chooses to
become a teacher. “I think as teachers, we’re such givers...because we give so much of
ourselves. That’s our heart.”

Both Mitch and Paula repeatedly referred to a sense of joy they receive from
teaching. “By and large...people aren’t teachers because they want their summers off, “
Mitch said. “You’re dealing with teachers who want to be [educators].” Paula asserted,
“I love this [teaching]. I love this. I don’t know how else to express it....I am motivated
by the joy of teaching.”

Chad explained that he was motivated to teach in order to provide a role model
for students to remember. “That’s the goal...that they’ll remember me...but learn some
things along the way.”

Finally, Catrine shared her reason for becoming a teacher. “I feel like teaching is
a calling. I got that divine call when I was in third grade.... God wants me in the
classroom with the children...touching them directly every single day.”

Qualities of an Accomplished Educator

Participants in the focus group meetings described various qualities they felt
embodied excellent or accomplished teaching. Participants were asked individually to
narrow the top five qualities of an outstanding educator. They recorded each
characteristic on separate index cards and taped their five cards on a wall chart.
Each focus group participant then discussed his/her rationale for selecting five particular qualities. Participants responded to one another. The qualities for accomplished teaching that they identified are listed in Table 5.5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualities of an Accomplished Educator</th>
<th>NBPTS Candidate</th>
<th>NBPTS Certified</th>
<th>Regular Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>Ken * Mindy 1</td>
<td>1 1 2 3</td>
<td>2 1 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learner/Risk-Taker</td>
<td>Phil 4 Tanya 1 4</td>
<td>4 4</td>
<td>4 2 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidently Meet All Students' Needs</td>
<td>Trina 3 2 1 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-Area Expertise</td>
<td>2 4</td>
<td>5 3 3 3 3 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Theory Expertise</td>
<td>* 2 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>1 3 *</td>
<td>1 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Player</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful Towards Students &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go Beyond Call of Duty</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Standards for Self &amp; Students</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Focused</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner With Community</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keenly Self-Aware</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for Profession</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Sensitive</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager of Students</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of Joy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinarian</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enduring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5: Participants' Ranking of Qualities of an Accomplished Educator (1=Highest Importance, *=Equal Importance, N=Not Reporting)
Table 5.5 suggests that the majority of participants believed that an educator’s ability to be reflective about his/her practice by understanding personal teaching rationale and methods is critical. The reflective category was of primary importance in the perspectives of Alicia, Chad, David, Leah, Paula, and Phil. Interestingly, the NBPTS Candidate group did not tend to include this category in their formal responses.

Chad’s comments helped to validate their observation. “If you don’t ask yourself, ‘How did that go? What could I have done better?’... You lose sight of what you need to be teaching,” he said. Paula reinforced this idea, “I had a professor in college who said, ‘If you don’t stop several times a day and say why are the children doing this? Why am I doing this? Then you’re not doing a good job.’”

Eight participants stressed the importance of an accomplished teacher being current with learning as well as willing to try new teaching methodologies. Admitted Lydia, “I am a big risk-taker. I fail very often, but in the end I usually end up with something really good.” Mitch seconded Lydia’s opinion, “You have to be willing to try new things. You keep trying.”

Seven participants prioritized high standards and teacher efficacy for all students. Jacqui asserted, “Those children are your responsibility. It’s not ‘Well, they’ll get it sometime. I’m just going to let them waltz through their first-grade year and eventually they’ll pick it up!’ It’s not eventually; it’s your responsibility.” Tanya maintained that accomplished educators set high standards for “all children” and personally follow through to assure each child’s success.
The final category around which most participants rallied was subject-area knowledge. Leah reasoned that teachers must be well versed in various content areas “so they know what connections to make when children are ready.”

When viewing the results of Table 5.5, it is revealing to analyze responses across participant groups. One finds the greatest level of similarity and agreement of beliefs in the group that did not choose to seek National Board Certification. Unlike this group, participants who attempted but did not pass National Board Certification demonstrated the most heterogeneous responses when compared within their group and across other groups. Details related to differing values systems were presented in Chapter 4. However, the implications for this cross-case analysis issue will be addressed in Chapter 6.

Having earlier examined participants’ belief systems toward the broad field of education, this section examines more specifically participants’ perceptions and actions toward their own teaching roles.

Classroom Methods

In a previous section entitled “Learning Style,” participants shared that their own childhood mode of learning impacted how they approached working with students in their classrooms. With attention given to their own learning preferences, participants varied in the degree to which they adjusted their classroom teaching methods to meet students’ learning styles that were different from their own.

In most cases, the teachers placed greater emphasis on students interacting with one another to enhance learning. Trina shared that throughout her years of teaching,
instead of using desks, she grouped students at one large table. "I believe in students working together and facing each other for interaction." Similarly, Tess said that during math and social studies lessons, visitors often observe her students "helping each other" in groups throughout the classroom while Lydia explained, "My goal is to have children learning from each other... kids asking each other questions... they really can!"

Other participants, including Mitch, Chad, and Jacqui, reported utilizing traditional methods of instruction that relied more heavily on direct teacher instruction. Said Mitch, "I'm fairly old-fashioned. I'm in front; I have the pen." Chad also characterized himself as "a very traditional teacher." He clarified, "It's not all just me up front... I try to be the facilitator as well as just the lecturer." Finally, Jacqui recalled her childhood fascination with the traditional approaches of "learning facts" and "taking tests." She concluded, "I now find myself doing that with my students."

Most of the elementary teachers cited their frequent use of visual and hands-on methods of instructing young children. Tanya described the framework she typically uses with lessons.

When I begin a lesson, I usually begin with a 10- to 15- minute short lesson where I introduce what it is that I want the children to learn. I will usually present the information on the board or easel, from a book, or I will use some sort of other visual information. After I build background for the children, I will allow the children to work on a concept with some sort of manipulatives.... I will end the lesson by getting some sort of feedback or assessment information.

Participants differed on their approaches to classroom curriculum management. Some incorporated student-initiative project opportunities into their curriculum and
others followed a teacher-prescribed curriculum. While the majority of participants drew
topics of study from sources other than their students, a few teachers periodically relied
on students to determine topics for study. Alicia, David, and Trina were the only
participants to apply the project-approach in their teaching as a way to meet the unique
needs of students. Explained Alicia, “The kids do a lot of projects in my room that are
open-ended...because I feel the kids of higher ability can really run with it.” David
commented, “We do not have textbooks at our school.... The students are individually
tailored as far as what we should be doing for them...we try to be accepting of that and
challenge each student to do better.” Trina said, “They [students] decide what units we’re
going to study for the year.... They get to decide everything.”

**Reflection**

Most participants agreed that frequent thoughtful consideration and periodic
adjustment of one’s pedagogy was characteristic of accomplished teachers. Educators
who were reflective, according to Paula and Ken, asked themselves *why* they taught in a
particular manner. Tess believed that reflective practitioners were open to questioning
and changing ineffective methods while Leah suggested that reflective teachers sought
additional help when they were unable to meet a particular student’s needs. Alicia felt
that reflective educators “inspired other people around them” and “pushed thinking in
others.” According to Alicia, reflective teachers were “always questioning their own
practices and questioning what’s going on so that they could get better.” Mitch agreed
with this observation. “[They] don’t do anything by rote,” he said. Chad added that
reflection often resulted in discomfort among teachers:
At our math meetings we talk about the whole controversy between conceptual and fact-related [mathematics instruction].... I don't want to feel wishy-washy, but sometimes I'm talking to someone and I think, "That's it!" Then you hear someone else. I feel like I'm caught in the middle.

Participants disagreed regarding how most teachers become reflective. Phil shared, "I think for some teachers this is instinctive. For others, they need to be taught."

Other participants such as Alicia and Paula argued that reflection was inborn. Said Alicia, "Sometimes I feel like people are either reflective or they're not... It's natural – it's a part of their personality." Others suggested that, through appropriate monitoring, reflection could be taught. "Sometimes you need people who push you and challenge you and say 'Try this!'" shared Tanya.

Participants disagreed why educators struggled to be reflective. Ken, Catrine, and Jacqui believed that the majority of teachers they knew were not as reflective as they should be about their practice. Explained Jacqui:

I don't think a lot of teachers have gone through the thought process of why they're teaching [in a particular manner]. If I went out and said, "How do you teach reading? Why do you teach it that way?",... They'd have to think about it for a very long time, which is something they should have done before the person even asked them.

Ken also confided, "The majority who I know are not reflective." Catrine agreed, "I think it's basically a time factor. It's not [that] they don't value it. It's like they don't take the luxury."
Differing with the previous view, Mindy and Trina believed that most teachers were reflective about their practices. Mindy argued that regardless of whether a teacher formally sits down to reflect on a lesson, the reflection “just happens.” Trina added, “I think all teachers are reflective; I think they go through that process.” Qualifying her response, however, she clarified, “I think in order to allow teachers to be reflective, we need to give them time to be that way.”

In summary, it is interesting to note that all of the group’s National Board participants believed that their reflective skills were enhanced as a result of going through the National Board Certification process. Mitch commended the NBPTS for helping candidates to “think differently” by reflecting on their lessons and asking themselves “Why did you do it?” Tanya agreed with Mitch’s assessment, adding “The process itself makes you very reflective.”

Graduate School

Several respondents expressed frustration that their graduate school programs emphasized theory to the exclusion of practical teaching methods. Seven participants questioned the practical value of enrolling in theory-focused graduate programs when attempting to improve students’ academic performances.

Lydia described her master’s degree experience with a hint of disappointment. “Everything they did was so innovative...[however] when you came to the reality, you had to really change.” Jacqui shared a similar perspective. “Going to class...makes you a well-rounded person. But as far as making you a better teacher, I’m not sure that it does....It has to be practical or it’s no good,” she said.
Chad was frustrated with the way his graduate classes were often conducted. "I taught all day and I'd sit there in class. You talk about there shouldn't be all these lectures? But what were all these [graduate] classes? They were lectures!"

Phil expressed dissatisfaction with the Holmes Agenda recently adopted by his local university. He disagreed that student teachers should be required to attend fifth-year master’s degree programs. He felt that students graduating from such programs were not necessarily better educators. "That doesn't mean you can teach! It does not mean you work with kids!" Phil believed that as a result of such programs requiring further schooling, the skills that make an accomplished teacher are diminished and devalued through "credentialization."

In contrast, Alicia, Catrine, and Leah viewed their graduate school experience favorably. Catrine shared, "I think professional development has to be usable; it has to be realistic... knowing educational trends." Catrine felt that her own graduate school experience "brought those two [practicality and innovation] together."

Alicia was involved in her local university's Professional Development Site (PDS) program during the time of this study. She recounted, "The PDS program is a great example of ongoing professional development.... It keeps us thinking in groups where people get a lot of different ideas.... It keeps us connected with the university."

**Professional Development**

Overwhelmingly, participants emphasized that on-going professional training for practicing teachers should be more practical than theoretical. "Professional development has to be usable; it has to be realistic," declared Catrine. Ken agreed. "The best
development is what you can use in your classroom.... So much of our development is listening to someone in an ivory tower. That's not beneficial to me." Referring to her graduate program, Mindy shared, "That [university teaching]...is theory. That's nice, but it's not practical." Tanya added, "Anything that helps us teach children better is what professional development is all about...that has to be our priority."

There was slight disagreement within the group as to where ideas for professional development should originate. Both Alicia and Tess felt that they should come from the perceived needs of teachers, as opposed to those from what Tess considered as "someone who really isn't experienced in the classroom." She vented her frustration, citing typical non-teacher-initiated workshops that are often "a waste of time."

Both Paula and Chad expressed the desire for authority figures to provide leadership in improving professional development. Complained Paula, "I see our [current] in-service as a waste of time." However, Paula looked favorably on university contact with her school to help professional development efforts. "If only we had more contact with the university," she said. "You read sometimes about this research where people come into the building and help you do things with kids.... We don't have much opportunity."

According to Leah and Lydia, a critical component of professional development is increased self-awareness. "I think that a really good piece of professional development is understanding who you are as a person, and then who you are as a professional and then what goals you have for yourself," said Leah. Lydia added that quality professional development "makes your brain think.... There needs to be serious change that occurs."
Rationale for Remaining a Teacher

Several patterns emerged as participants discussed their motivation to remain in the field of education rather than pursue a different career. Widely mentioned across groups was a love for both students and teaching. Paula described her passion for the profession as “motivated by the joy of teaching.” Alicia likewise shared, “I love the students. Teaching is rewarding.” Trina reflected, “I have a natural love and desire to teach year after year. I have been teaching for eight years and I get more excited each year.” Mitch shared, “I love to see people learn. When a person leaves me knowing more than when they met me, then I have done my job of helping them realize their full potential.”

Mentioned as a motivator just as frequently was participants’ desire to make an impact on students’ learning and general well-being. “Seeing my students grow older with knowledge and wisdom encourages me to keep at it,” David shared. Chad explained, “I love teaching kids and seeing that ‘light bulb’ come on—there’s nothing more rewarding in this profession!” Mindy described her motivation as “knowing that I can make a difference and seeing the progress happen even if it is very slow.”

Alicia and Catrine noted the deep sense of personal gratification that came from learning about their career. Said Alicia, “I keep learning new ways to improve my teaching and that, in and of itself, is motivating.” Added Catrine, “I am continuing to learn from and be inspired by [my students] daily.”
Summary of “Attitude Toward Profession”

- Participants portrayed passionate and joyful attitudes toward their rationale for teaching. Motives typically included a call to contribute to society, to act as a role model, and to help develop the minds of young learners.

- Participants agreed overwhelmingly that accomplished educators were primarily reflective, continuing learners, risk-takers, effective with all students, and highly knowledgeable in their content areas.

- Participants’ pedagogical styles differed. Their unique teaching approaches depended on the teaching methods with which they had become most familiar and comfortable throughout their years of schooling.

- Participants disagreed on whether the ability to be a reflective practitioner was primarily a learned or innate skill.

- Participants expressed frustration mostly toward graduate school and professional development programs that they believed emphasized theory to the exclusion of practical teaching methods. Those praising their programs felt that lessons applied directly to their daily work with students.

- Participants remained in the field of teaching primarily for the reasons that they first entered teaching (see first bullet).

Tensions of Teaching

Having earlier examined participants’ belief systems toward the broad field of education, this section examines more specifically participants’ perceptions and actions
toward the teaching roles they found to be difficult. Many tensions were evident in the findings and are presented in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Absence/Presence of Data in Sub-category (Tensions of Teaching)

**Student Needs**

A majority of participants noted the increased academic and emotional demands placed on them as a result of growing student needs. These included problems with drugs, divorce, abuse, pregnancy and illiteracy in students’ homes — all greatly affecting academic learning.

"The school is just a microcosm of the world in which we live," observed Catrine. "The demands on educators have increased because of the things which are happening in society—babies having babies, drugs, single parent families, etc...." Mindy, a fourth year
teacher, expressed her concerns about difficult, medicated, and non-motivated students. In hopes of learning how to deal more effectively with the problems, she shared, "I am going to a conference on difficult and medicated children that I hope will give me strategies to use next year."

Tess and Ken told of their separate but similar experiences of becoming "substitute" parents to some children. "We've taken on a lot more roles and responsibilities than five years ago because it's easier for us to just go ahead and do it as opposed to theoretically saying it's not our job," observed Tess. She asked, "Is it our job to teach kids [to say] 'please' and 'thank you'?" Ken described how he took two boys into his home who 'had no place to go.' While he admits, "that wasn't my job," he states proudly, "I got them to graduate from high school and one is in college."

Participants described some other ways that teachers have coped with various student demands. David shared, "To deal with disruptive students I need to look more at what I am doing to make them disruptive...and make them feel comfortable, relaxed, and successful in the classroom." Reflecting on the need for teachers to band together to address this challenge, he stated, "Teaching is so full of stress and emotions that you need to tell each other [teacher-to-teacher] 'you're doing a good job. I know it's hard with that child....' Otherwise, you fall back on modes of teaching that are not effective." Chad added, "If you're having a bad day, you just want the kids to leave you alone. You want to give them work and you want to sit at your desk...honestly, I think we all do that just because we're human."

A number of Caucasian teachers periodically expressed the difficulties they experienced in meeting all of their urban students' needs. Lydia praised her district's
focus on professional development surrounding urban issues. "All we're talking about is urban," she said. Tanya, also a Caucasian educator teaching in the same district, remarked, "Nothing could have prepared me for the tremendous needs that I found in the inner-city communities of the large urban district where I teach."

Tess and Paula found that the stresses of teaching often manifested themselves in cynicism. Reflecting on the mounting pressure she has felt to meet students' increasing social and emotional needs, Tess admitted to harboring and even exhibiting "negativism and sometimes cynicism." Paula likewise observed, "Our job is very stressful.... To a lot of people, talking or joking is a release."

**Work Environment**

Participants often described work environments that were charged with tension and stress. Educators shared feelings of disillusionment over a lack of staff unity, need for peer support, problems with widespread jealousy, and colleagues' open displays of frustration and negativity.

**Teamwork.** Only three participants described a high level of satisfaction toward the level of cooperative work among educators within their schools. Ken, Tanya and Tess praised fellow teachers' attitudes of personal and professional care toward one another. "Everybody is supportive of one another. We have social gatherings, " shared Ken, while Tess added, "We have good interaction...as far as understanding...the same philosophy within the building."

Jacqui commented wishfully that she would like to develop building teamwork in her district as well. "There's a lot of 'you do your thing, we'll do our thing.' If it
coincides, it coincides. If it doesn’t, it doesn’t. I like when we all work together as a
team and we’re all going for that same goal.” Lydia had a similar perspective. “I don’t
think there’s enough teamwork in our school,” she said. “I think everybody kind of does
their own thing.” There were other teamwork issues. Catrine expressed concern for
students promoted to teachers who did not create what she considered to be a
“developmentally appropriate” classroom environment. “I feel really bad for my
students who are going from an atmosphere where…they move around…to an
atmosphere where they have to sit a large period of the day.”

**School Philosophy.** To address the “mixed philosophy” dilemma discussed
above, some schools have adopted a building-wide philosophy to unify the goals of larger
teaching staffs. David praised his school for adopting a “casual, student-oriented”
approach to education. “We focus on the child at this school; the multiple intelligence.”
As a result of this philosophy,” said David, “I get to work intimately with other teachers.
As difficult as that is, it’s really important to me because I’ve found the concept of a
single classroom with 30 kids really lonely and very confining.”

Tanya also appreciated her school’s philosophy. “The philosophy…is that
professional development is to be embedded in your workday.” As a result, Tanya’s staff
committed to meeting one hour at the end of each school day to engage in dialogue
surrounding school issues. Tanya confided that teamwork was difficult at points. “They
don’t [always] agree. It’s hard to develop consensus…. We’ve even been in-serviced on
how to develop consensus.”

Finally, Alicia proudly described her school’s Project Adventure philosophy. “I
think of Project Adventure as an umbrella under which there are lots of different
components, such as taking physical challenges, helping kids to take risks, developing problem-solving. For a whole school to have that philosophy is unique."

**Desire to Feel Valued by Peers.** Almost every participant expressed a strong desire to feel valued by fellow teachers for his/her professional contributions. Tanya Alicia, Leah, Mindy and Jacqui each communicated a personal desire to receive verbal recognition for outstanding effort and performance from peers. Disillusioned by the lack of mutual respect demonstrated among teachers of different grade levels, Jacqui stated, “I would like it if teachers in the elementary, middle and high school traded places to get a basis of [appreciation]... within the education world... there’s some animosity within education between the different levels.”

Hunger for recognition and professional validation was a continuing need for many teachers. Mindy recalled that after receiving her master’s degree, she hoped that her fellow teachers might recognize her efforts with a little get-together or celebration. “They never had anything for me. They didn’t say congratulations.... I got my master’s degree!”

Tanya also shared her strong feelings on the importance of educators recognizing their peers. “In every other industry and profession people are recognized in their jobs and they get certain incentives to become better. Why shouldn’t teachers?

**Peer Jealousy.** Several study participants described incidents of professional jealousy from colleagues when they (study participants) received recognition. For example, Chad and Paula related incidents where staff resentment was shown toward fellow educators working on advanced degrees. “I’ve heard people say, ‘Well, she has
her master’s so she just thinks she knows everything about math,” said Chad. Added Paula:

There is so much resentment toward...[teacher at her school] with her doctorate that it is unbelievable. It’s so stupid. Why wouldn’t you want the teacher next to you...to know everything they could, so that if you didn’t know something, they could help you out? That doesn’t make any sense to me at all!

David described staff jealousy at his school toward a teacher who is a published author and National Board-Certified teacher. “There’s a lot of talk behind her back that she doesn’t do what she says she does.”

Tanya observed, “Teachers don’t really have a lot of self esteem about their teaching ability. They do get jealous! It’s the culture of our profession, especially in elementary buildings.”

**Teachers’ Lounge.** A number of participants commented on concerns surrounding teacher negativity in their school’s teachers’ lounge. David, Paula, Trina and Catrine all said that they avoided the teachers’ lounge for this reason. Remarked Catrine, “After all of these years, I don’t eat in the lounge with the other teachers. My purpose for not eating in the lounge is because there is so much negativity about children.”

David also lamented, “The first school I started teaching at, the lounge was a place to socialize. You could laugh at your kids but you would not have professional discussion between each other.”

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**Isolation**

The vast majority of participants — even those working in schools with concentrated efforts towards teamwork — shared frustration with the low level of professional dialogue and interaction among staff. Concerns surrounding professional dialogue, physical separation, and poor rapport among staff members were central to these discussions.

**Lack of Dialogue.** Virtually all participants who expressed frustration with professional isolation blamed a lack of meaningful professional discussion among peers as a major contributor. Even within David’s school, which has a building-wide philosophy, he observed, “Our communication is still very weak…. I think a building should have more teachers talking, supporting each other, and questioning each other.”

Stated David,

How much of the classroom is our little kingdom? We’re worried about somebody having a negative opinion about us or butting into our power…. I have often said that teaching is very lonely. People don’t want to really talk about what they do in that room.

Referring to this study interview and dialogue, Lydia stated,

It bothers me that I would not feel comfortable in my school sitting down and having this conversation [about belief systems] with anybody…. Even as outgoing or blunt…as I am, I just know to tip-toe around the people. I really think if we don’t have these kinds of conversations everywhere, then nothing’s going to change.
Building Layout. A number of study participants suggested that the lack of teacher teamwork may be fostered by physical separation created by their school building design. The perception of the solitary educator was shared by Trina, Chad, Lydia, Mindy and Tess. Observed Chad, “The layout of the school is hard...the fourth grade is out in the modulars in a building by themselves.”

Echoing Chad’s concern, Trina added, “I’m fairly isolated from the teachers because I have a resource room and I see the students once a week. I don’t eat in the teachers’ lounge, so I really don’t get much interaction.”

Closed Doors. Other participants discussed teachers’ fears of opening their doors to invite fellow educators to view their teaching. “No one wants to let anybody in their room to say, ‘You need to do this. This is great! You could do this better,’” worried Lydia. “That’s really the only way that you learn—by having somebody else observe you.”

Reflecting that during her 14 years of working with the same teachers, she had never observed their presentation of a lesson, Tess stated, “I have never spent one minute in their classroom watching them... That would be good for me... It would make me feel like I’m doing this right or that wrong.”

Paula summarized her view on the matter. “We come in here and we close our doors and we’re on our own.”

Distrust. In order to combat isolation, a number of participants suggested that trust must first be built among staff members. Referring to her building’s success in developing trust through daily dialogue, Tanya explained, “If there’s a concern, its
expected that you’re comfortable enough to share that concern in front of everybody and that we’ll figure out how to make it better.”

Lydia vented her frustration with the lack of trust among fellow teachers. “When there’s really a problem … we don’t ever really sit down and say, ‘Well, what really is your problem?’ Why aren’t we working as a team?’ … We’re all too polite.” Paula concurred, “You need small groups of people who talk and care and trust each other enough to disagree.”

**Conscious Decision.** Rather than risk reaching out to fellow teachers, both Paula and Jacqui admitted to making a conscious decision to go into isolation as a way of dealing with the lack of teamwork at their buildings. With mild sarcasm, Paula explained, “There’s so much we never get to hear or know about. That’s because I shut my door! It’s true. I wish I didn’t, but I just can’t stand it [teachers fighting].”

Likewise, Jacqui used a similar approach, withdrawing from frustrated attempts at teamwork. “I’m really close to shutting my doors and locking the rest of the world out,” she said.

**Leadership**

Participants viewed leadership in two different ways. While the majority felt that teachers, themselves, must step up and become leaders in their buildings, two participants from the group who did not choose to seek National Board Certification looked toward their administrators to provide the bulk of their building’s guidance and leadership.

**Teacher Leadership.** Nearly every participant reported engaging in both formal and informal leadership roles in their buildings. For some, the experience of leadership
had been positive and invigorating. For others, the experience had been primarily negative.

Participants who lead student or peer groups expressed the greatest satisfaction with their roles. Referring to her role as social committee chair for her union, Tess said, “That’s the most rewarding [leadership role] ... because it helps keep the staff together.” Tess also enjoyed volunteering as the Quiz Bowl after-school student advisor.

Likewise, Chad chose to advise a “Just Say No” anti-drug club for his building because, as he put it, “I get to see the kids in a different light.... The kids don’t really see you as a teacher but they actually see you as a person.” Catrine expressed her satisfaction in mentoring fellow kindergarten teachers as well as National Board candidates. “I think that my primary role with other teachers is to share a lot of things that I have learned.”

One veteran teacher vented her frustration regarding unsuccessfully attempting to lead peers over the years. Shared Paula, “A long time ago, I tried to have a group before school... for meaningful conversation.... Teachers said, ‘I don’t have time!’ .... That was it! It was done!” Paula concluded, “I don’t think I’m much of a leader.”

Also discussing negative leadership concerns, Chad expressed frustration with his school administration. “It’s hard being on committees because you feel like you voice your opinion but nothing changes,” he complained. “It’s like things are set anyway but yet they want to make you feel like you have a say in what’s going on.”

Ken recalled the unofficial leadership role in which he was placed by administration. Unfortunately, it was not a positive experience. “I had a principal so weak that he would send me his discipline problems.... I was used as a consultant without being given that title of a consultant.”
Two participants were acting as facilitators for the NBPTS during the time of the study, Catrine and Mitch. Both enjoyed their role of mentoring new candidates. "One of the professional growth experiences with National Board is being an assessor...you see people's materials from all over the country, so you pick up ideas," said Catrine.

**Administrative Leadership.** Several diverse patterns emerged with respect to participants' perceptions of "quality" educational administrators. While some viewed the administrator's role as an instructor, staff communicator, facilitator of teamwork, and leader, others felt strongly that teachers should be assuming these roles for their buildings.

**Instructor.** According to the majority of participants, accomplished administrators were capable of recognizing good teaching by understanding what should and does happen in the classroom. Participants Jacqui and Lydia expressed some reservations, however. Jacqui worried for example that, "The administrators I've been under are great people, but as far as their knowledge about education [methods]...they're weak in it." Lydia also was concerned about administrators' ability to appreciate quality classroom instruction. "Every time someone comes in...they've all said to me, 'I don't know what you're doing in here, but you're doing a good job!'"

All but one participant agreed that administrators should be capable instructors as well as leaders. David recalled, "I've not seen any principal yet be a curriculum instructor.... None of them even know how teachers are teaching nor do they seem to care to offer criticism or critiques. They're absent from the classroom." Mitch suggested, "Administration needs to teach every two or three years. I don't think anyone should be
in administration for 10 or 15 years. They don’t know what’s going on in the classroom any longer. They just do not.”

In contrast, Leah considered her administrator to be a skilled manager. “She doesn’t get… involved in coming into the classroom and working with kids…. She’s more of a ‘You do your thing, you’re best at what you do.’” Leah was satisfied with her administrator’s approach to working with teachers because she felt that it supported the empowerment of teachers.

Alicia recalled a very positive and memorable experience with her past administrator, who also acted as an instructor at the time. “My former principal co-taught with me. She taught with me [one]… entire day. We planned together, we talked together, and we reflected together…. I loved it!”

Communicator. Mindy, Lydia, Chad and Tess all listed communication as a top priority for their administrator. Mindy praised her principal. “My principal makes communication happen. He’s always visible. He comes in my room at least every other day…. I think that’s important.” Recalling the poor communication skills of her past principal, Mindy stated, “No one ever saw her. She was in her office with the door closed.”

Lydia and Alicia viewed communication with administration as a two-way responsibility. Commented Alicia, “My role is to help my new administrator figure out what’s going on at our school.” Lydia acted in a similar capacity with her current principal. She gave an example of how she approaches her administrator. “Hey, these are the things I’m hearing. This is the tone I’m hearing from the building. You might want to address this before it becomes an issue.”
**Facilitator.** Tanya, Leah and Chad each spoke to the importance of administrators encouraging professional development opportunities for staff. Asserted Tanya, “You should be able to go to your principal if you want to learn more about something. … The principal should have the knowledge and capability to find types of professional development… that will allow you to do what’s important in the classroom.”

Leah recalled a past administrator she considered to be outstanding in this area. “He’d give suggestions and be aware enough to know what teachers were doing and connect those teachers.”

**Co-Leader.** Finally, a small number of participants felt that effective administrators permitted teachers to participate in decision-making. Tanya and Leah both praised their administrators for knowing how to delegate important duties. Referring to her own administrator, Tanya shared, “Some administrators think of themselves as an instructional leader of the building. … That may not be her [Tanya’s administrator’s] strength, but… she knows how to delegate that duty.”

Leah described her view of effective administrative leadership as permitting teachers “to do what you need to do as opposed to somebody saying ‘This is the way you’re going to do this.’”

**Evaluation**

Participants, as a whole, were highly frustrated with the current systems of evaluation in place to assess teacher and student performance. Educators recommended restructuring measures of both teacher and student achievement by using holistic and developmental models for evaluation.
**Teacher Effectiveness.** All participants complained that systems for teacher evaluation by administrators alone were ineffective and nearly meaningless to teachers. They charged that the vast majority of administrators were unaware of what actually occurred in teacher classrooms. “I don’t feel like they really know much about what we’re doing,” shared Jacqui. “As far as their knowledge about education and beginning reading, I think they’re weak.” Catrine also expressed her disappointment with principal evaluations over the years. Where, in her opinion, “most of my male principals had no concept of what [was being] taught in kindergarten.”

Additional concerns over evaluation stemmed from participants’ desire for more longitudinal and multi-faceted assessments of teaching ability. Asked Chad, “Isn’t it [principals’] jobs to know that there’s more to teaching than just one day? I think stopping and watching doesn’t tell them anything.” Lydia concurred, “It has to be multi-faceted…. Someone should be able to walk into your room at any time and observe what’s going on.”

Lydia shared her view of an ideal evaluation in which the teacher would sit down with the principal and dialogue about the lesson. “This is the concept I’m trying to teach. This is the assessment tool…. Let’s see how the kids did on the assessment. Were you effective in communicating? What could you do?” Instead, participants such as David, Jacqui, Tess and Lydia complained that administrators often focused on issues of classroom management, to the exclusion of classroom instruction. David recalled, for example, one experience in which his principal overlooked an outstanding lesson and instead informed him that his students were noisy in the hallway.
Tess had a similar experience. “Because I had such a bad class last year, I’m not sure my principal thought I was doing a good job. This year my class is better…but I’m still the same person.” Tess worried that her principal evaluated her teaching ability based on “the problems that were in my classroom as opposed to what I was actually doing in my classroom.” Each posed the alternative of peer-assessment for addressing concerns.

Alicia recalled a successful peer-evaluation in which she recently participated. “One of the third-grade teachers asked me to come down and do her evaluation…. It was a great opportunity for me and for the other teacher. She seemed to appreciate it.” Tanya also shared her school’s success with peer coaching and to provide “honest feedback.” Observed Tanya, “That was a better form of evaluation instead of every other year getting these ‘Satisfactory’ and ‘Unsatisfactorys’ that said nothing about how I was really thinking about how to continue to be an educator.”

**Proficiency Testing.** Almost all participants expressed extreme frustration with current state pressures to raise students’ test scores on standardized measures. According to fourth-grade teachers Lydia, Chad, David and Ken, proficiency emphasis is currently driving their teaching objectives. Shared Chad, “Unfortunately, in fourth grade…we are driven by the test…. My role is molded by what’s on the test.” Lydia also vented, “I am extremely hampered by proficiency pacing guides and benchmark tests.” David added, “The current trend for testing may be dumbing down our students. They’re starting to view the world as ‘Can you pass this one test?’”

Lydia and Ken also suggested that proficiency pressures might be to blame for increased teacher attrition rates in their district. “Right now with all the test scores, the
climate is really a teacher-bashing environment for urban areas…. I think that’s why we’ve lost 120-175 teachers this year in our school system.” Ken conceded, “I’m thinking I may get out of fourth [grade] because of the proficiency pressure.”

Almost all participants expressed concern over efforts to judge teacher effectiveness based on their students’ proficiency test scores. Alicia asserted that teacher evaluations should be multi-faceted and “look at student achievement compared to where the kids started from; not compared to the state expectations.” Referring to testing subjectivity, Mitch cautioned, “When you’re giving a test you’re not testing yourself; you’re testing how well the students learn…. I can make a test today that everyone would pass. I can make one that everyone would fail.” Lydia shared her experience having taught in both lower- and middle-class schools. “Looking at the test scores…when I’m teaching in the middle-class neighborhood, then I become a valid teacher. I did not change from one place to the other.”

One participant took exception to the group’s dislike of proficiency testing. Said Jacqui, “I think benchmarks are good. I think you just have to realize what the teacher had to work with in the beginning.” She conceded, “That’s the only problem. You can’t compare teacher to teacher.”

As an alternative to proficiency testing, participants suggested utilizing developmental assessments to demonstrate more accurately students’ progress in learning throughout the school year. Mindy explained, “I think it should be based on whether the children are learning…not on a standardized test.” Phil agreed, “You recognize they didn’t meet the standardized demonstrated competency, but you show the process you
worked with and how they developed.... You'll have some kids who are going to pass and some kids who won’t. Education really is about growth and development.”

**Validation**

Participants expressed varying degrees of need for validation of their professional abilities. While some focused more heavily on the satisfaction they felt toward current sources of validation, others spoke of future hopes for validation.

**Justification.** Participants generally agreed that accomplished educators should receive appropriate recognition. Jacqui explained her rationale. “I don’t think much [validation] is given to teachers. I think if you’re a good teacher, a bad teacher, basically you’re just treated the same. There is no incentive or rewards program for doing an outstanding job.” Catrine agreed, “We need to recognize...[accomplished teachers] wherever they are.... In any other profession you’re going to receive merit pay or you’re going to receive a promotion. I think it does something for your psyche when people say it publicly.”

**Current Sources.** Analysis indicates that participant groups varied widely with respect to the sources from which they sought validation. While all groups valued student and parent feedback, Table 5.7 demonstrates that the two groups that applied for National Board Certification had the most interest in drawing validation from adults within the school, as well as institutions of higher learning. In contrast, participants who did not seek National Board Certification looked primarily toward parents as a source of validation.
Table 5.7: Current Sources of Validation for Participants' Belief Systems

All participants except one, Phil, desired increased recognition of accomplished teaching from fellow teachers, administrators and the public.

Some participants hesitated to seek affirmation of professional abilities because of the potential for negative peer reaction. For example, various participants admitted to
avoiding seeking recognition for fear it would be interpreted as “bragging.” “I was the kind that if you had confidence, it was bragging... So I always kept silent.” Chad cautioned administrators, “Be careful if it’s the same person being talked about all the time.... You might not be as showy as somebody else, but yet they get the kudos because they’re the type that show off their tail feathers.” Mindy admitted, “I’m real shy about that [recognition].... It’s nice, but I don’t want people to think I’m trying to be better than them.”

**Desired Sources.**

Participants who desired to receive further validation shared identified three main sources from which they believed this validation should increase. These sources included fellow teachers, the public, and the media.

**Fellow Teachers.** Two participants strongly urged teachers to validate one another. Ken believed that sharing techniques “could be a way to share pedagogical techniques that work.” Tanya agreed, “First of all, you need to be recognized in your building...by doing...peer observations, letting other teachers into your room who you trust.”

Of particular concern was the urban participants’ desire to be validated by their suburban and rural educational counterparts. Mindy observed, “When I tell them I teach in the inner city...peoples’ view of education ...is really messed up. My friend who teaches in the suburb said, ‘I don’t think I could teach there. It seems like it would be so rough and the kids are so bad.’ It’s not like that.” Alicia noted, “In other districts where the kids are higher performing, they think that the teachers in ...[city schools] are not as
hard-working because the kids don’t do well…. I [feel] devalued by other teachers who teach in different districts.”

Public. Many participants expressed feelings of being devalued by the public. Ken and Catrine recalled a saying that they had heard many times that epitomized, in their eyes, the public’s view of education, “Those who can do, and those who can’t teach.” Ken shared, “I hate that…old adage.” Catrine lamented, “It’s so sad because people don’t seem to understand.”

Often, participants worried that the public under-appreciated the teacher’s role. Lydia complained, “I think they think that teachers have it easy…. We’ve got summers off.” Alicia agreed, “I feel like as a profession, we’re under-recognized and under-appreciated. We should make more money. A number of participants felt that most people believed they were capable of being quality teachers.” Jacqui, a first-grade reading teacher said, “You feel like you’re less of a professional because the next-door neighbor knows how to read. So they think they’re an expert on teaching reading. That’s not the case.” Said Paula,

I’ve heard this over and over through the years, “Oh, I could teach school. You don’t work! You have three months off in the summer. All you do is go down there and tell those kids what to do. You’re not really working. I could do that!

Media. Participants shared sweeping concerns for the way in which the education system was portrayed by the media. Overwhelmingly, they agreed that both local and national media tended to focus on schools’ social rather than academic events. Catrine worried, “Because of all the negative press…the [public’s] perception of education is not
that great…. We need to do something about the media.” Ken agreed, “We need to get
the public to understand that we are working…our tails off.”

Participants often reported a large discrepancy between local and national
perceptions of teacher effectiveness. While the national public may view schools in a
negative light, Catrine, Leah, Mitch and Paula each felt that the local public was
generally more appreciative of their efforts. Catrine shared that parents have said,
“That’s the exception to the rule. Isn’t my child fortunate to be in that classroom?” Leah
observed, “People who have been related to or associated with teaching have a very good
sense of [what]… it takes to be a quality teacher.” Mitch agreed, “Everyone believes that
the national education system is in serious trouble…but yet their particular local schools
are doing a good job.”

Summary of “Tensions of Teaching”

- Participants often felt overwhelmed by the increasing demands placed upon them
  as a result of students’ problems with drugs, divorce, pregnancy, illiteracy, and
  behavior issues.
- Caucasian participants in urban settings often expressed worry toward their
  struggle to cross socio-economic and cultural boundaries to meet the needs of
  their students. African-American participants teaching in the same urban districts
did not express difficulty with this issue.
- Participants believed that problems among staff members persisted because of a
  lack of team-building efforts within buildings. Participants desired increased
  professional dialogue, and staff unity.
• Participants unanimously spoke to concerns of teacher isolation resulting from lack of professional dialogue, physical separations, and poor rapport among staff members.

• Participants disagreed on issues of leadership. While most participants asserted that teachers should make the majority of important school decisions, a small group believed that this leadership should come from administration.

• Participants adamantly recommended restructuring measures of both teacher and student performance by implementing holistic, developmental, and longitudinal evaluation models.

• Participants generally agreed that accomplished teachers needed to receive increased recognition from fellow teachers, the public and the media.

• Participants from both National Board groups overwhelmingly expressed the desire to receive formal recognition for their accomplished teaching. By contrast, participants who did not choose to seek National Board Certification were generally personally uncomfortable with receiving formal recognition for their teaching.

• Participants reported a large discrepancy between local and national perceptions of teacher effectiveness. Particularly, they believed that local perceptions were favorable whereas national perceptions were negative due to incomplete media coverage.
The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has had a major impact on the professional identities of two participant groups. Table 5.8 suggests the myriad impacts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NBPTS Experience</th>
<th>NBPTS Candidate</th>
<th>NBPTS Certified</th>
<th>Regular Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View of Core Propositions</td>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Mindy</td>
<td>Phil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Applying</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Not Applying</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8: Absence/Presence of Data in Sub-category (NBPTS Experience)

**View of Core Propositions**

Each of the participants agreed with the five core propositions established by the NBPTS to measure accomplished teaching (see Chapter 2 for listing of five propositions). Having successfully gone through the process, Alicia observed, "The standards are really good. They're not... 'flash-in-the-pan standards'. It's a deep set of standards.... Any kind of methodology can fit these standards." Catrine added, "It's a really good system of
evaluation. I think the core propositions are very general.... I think they’re testing every area.... I think they’re complete. I don’t see anything missing.”

When presented with the NBPTS’s five core propositions during the focus group interviews, all participants agreed that the NBPTS had adequately captured vital areas for teaching excellence. However, when participants were asked during an earlier interview to list their five top guiding principles for accomplished teaching, their lists had some similarities and possible differences to the core propositions listed by the NBPTS. Participant lists will follow in the next section.

**Rationale for Applying**

Participants offered myriad motivations for attempting to achieve National Board certification. Their rationale for applying is presented in Table 5.9.

The table demonstrates that National Board participants as a whole were primarily motivated by the promise of national validation, recognition, and increased income. Alicia shared, “I’ve always gotten good evaluations from my principal.... I’ve always wondered, ‘Well, is it because I’m a nice person?’.... National Board Certification is a great way to validate yourself.” Ken stated, “[NBPTS] is trying to provide recognition for the profession. I believe that it is very rigorous.” Mindy shared, “A lot of people see teaching as down here and a lawyer up here. [NBPTS]... is trying to show that this is a professional career just like a lawyer makes boards.”

Interestingly, those who actually achieved certification were more motivated by
self-challenge and comparison to other educators than those participants who attempted
but did not achieve National Board certification. These participants, by contrast, were
more motivated by increased salary and broadened job opportunities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale for Applying</th>
<th>NBPTS Candidate</th>
<th>NBPTS Certified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Mindy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive National Validation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Income</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Respect for Teachers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Self Professionally</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Support Network</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain Inter-state Mobility</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Reflection</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluate</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broaden Job Opportunities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become Better Teacher</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Challenge</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare Self to Others</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Self-Esteem</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn New Ideas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Risk-Taking</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Learning to Students</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Credentials</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invited to Apply</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.9: Rationale for Applying

220
Rationale for Not Applying

The five participants who did not choose to seek National Board Certification, gave various reasons for their decision. Two indicated they would have been receptive to the opportunity at a different stage in their careers. Jacqui, deeply involved in her master’s program, and Paula, retiring at the end of the year, felt that the timing was not appropriate.

The other members of their group said they chose not to seek certification because of a concern for how the experience would influence their interaction with peers. Chad shared, “I guess I don’t like tooting my own horn. To go after something like that, I feel like ‘look at me! Look at me!’ That’s not me.”

David offered, “I’m not willing to give up the time to do it...[and] I don’t feel like I write very well.... Another reason is...I do not feel like getting into a comparison [with a co-worker].”

Tess had a similar reaction. “I don’t feel it would benefit me as a teacher; it would just take away from me as a person.... I feel like it’s a hoop-jumping situation that I don’t want to be a part of.”

In spite of the challenge and lengthy commitment, most study participants who were willing to go through the National Board Certification process once, were willing to do it again if they did not succeed on their first attempt. Although four out of the five NBPTS participants said they would bank their scores and reapply for certification, Phil did not. “I was three points away [from passing NBPTS],” he recalled. “I’m through. I was content with myself before doing this and I’m more than content now. I don’t need that.”
Outcomes

Although half of the NBPTS’s participants achieved certification, while the other half did not pass on their first attempt, candidates unanimously described the process as a positive experience. Several patterns emerged related to outcomes of applying for National Board Certification. For example, eight out of 10 National Board participants, including those who did not achieve certification, reported actually enjoying validation, positive publicity, and enhanced reflective abilities as a result of applying for National Board Certification.

The majority of the NBPTS said they enhanced reflective skills as a result. "The process itself makes you very reflective," said Tanya; while Mitch commented, "The process was easy for me. But a lot of people that I work with...had to think differently.... Why did you do it?.... What were you thinking?" Other advantages of achieving National Board Certification cited by the group included increased job opportunities, potential salary increases, and opportunities to work closely with other candidates while going through the process.

Although five of the National Board participants did not achieve certification on their first attempt, they generally maintained a positive attitude about their experience. All praised the process for providing valuable insight into their teaching. Most asserted that they were better teachers as a result. Even those who scored poorly praised the experience. "I deserved every single score I got," conceded Tanya. "I didn’t pass... [because] I didn’t understand about teaching [science concepts].... I learned from that
process. Now I can do it.” Trina added her observation, “Video-taping yourself...made you see your weaknesses...not the scores themselves, but the process.”

Among the NBPTS candidates who successfully completed their certification requirements, a pattern of trust emerged toward the NBPTS assessment process. “The evaluators are trained very well,” said Alicia. “I trust that the training they’re requiring is a really rigorous process.” Catrine, a National Board assessment trainer, also gave her perspective on the evaluation process. “You must qualify in order to be an assessor. We train them on benchmarks, then we give them training samples that have been pre-scored and validated.... We help them pick the evidence out...It’s a hard job...but I’m sure the system works. I’m positive that it works.” Added Mitch, “I don’t think there’s a problem with the validity of the assessment. It’s an accurate assessment for those accomplished teachers who can express themselves,” and Lydia, “You can’t pass if you’re not accomplished.”

Concerns

Participants identified a host of concerns surrounding the NBPTS’s ability to accurately identify accomplished teachers. These issues focused primarily on test development and assessment bias, as well as the impact of those who successfully achieved certification, versus those who did not.

Bias. The study uncovered a number of concerns related to the validity and trustworthiness of the NBPTS’s evaluation system. While each National Board participant had positive things to say about their NBPTS experience, most who did not pass shared a pattern of similar questions and concerns related to their scores. Across
participants who did not pass National Board, a noticeable concern for test bias surfaced. Mindy, Ken and Tanya questioned the accuracy of the assessments for those who had trouble with writing. Said Ken, "What held me back was...conveying my love of the profession. I think there's a little weakness there. They wanted me to paint that picture. I don't think I was able to paint it as well as I would have liked."

Likewise, Mindy struggled during the computer-writing portion. "It's a matter of how can I write this down and make it make sense without rambling?" Tanya asserted, "They're [NBPTS] excluding competent teachers who can't write reflectively.... Maybe it doesn't come across that every single day they're thinking about their children.... Those teachers are good teachers too."

Phil and Ken complained that NBPTS was requiring what amounted to "a song and dance." Asserted Phil, "If you read their materials, you can sit there and feed them back exactly what they want to hear." He recalled that he received his highest score from the assessment center activity. "That was the one time where I actually regurgitated the research that they had sent to us."

Two participants suggested that the NBPTS should work harder to draw minorities and urban teachers into the certification program. This issue is explored more fully in a later section.

**Scoring.** The NBPTS's scoring methodology perplexed half of all study participants who applied for National Board Certification. In both certified and non-certified groups, for example, participants periodically reported receiving high scores in subjects they originally considered to be their weakest areas, and low scores in areas they considered to be of personal strength. Trina recalled, "The only one that I disagreed with
was community-building. I realized why I got some of my other scores, but I’ve had some of these kids for three years…. I thought for some that it would come through.”

Ken, Mindy, Leah and Lydia each described feelings of shock over their highest scores. Leah remarked, “I was really surprised…. Some that I knew I did really well [with] — that I’m really good at — didn’t get the better marks. I’ve heard that from a lot of National Board-Certified teachers.” Lydia was also surprised. “I scored very low on reading. That’s why I started doing all this reading training and I realized how little I knew about reading…. ” She was equally amazed at receiving high marks in science. “When I originally got it [news of the high score] I was stunned because my science scores were way up there. I thought, ‘I’m so bad at science.’ But as I delved more into professional development …[the score was] right on naturally…. I learned a lot about myself!”

Assessment Measures. Phil was the only study participant to express concern regarding the appropriateness of the measures established by the NBPTS to judge teacher accomplishment. He had previously conducted his own research in this area and submitted a formal plea to the NBPTS. He believed his idea to include students’ standardized test scores as an additional measure of teacher accomplishment was too quickly dismissed by NBPTS officials.

Low Number of Minority Applicants. Catrine, one of the NBPTS assessment trainers, discussed NBPTS’s concern over the low number of minority candidates currently applying for certification. “Some standards on the test seem to be more difficult for minorities because of the way that they’re written,” she stated. “Some of the teachers shy away from it because of that.” She was confident, however, that the NBPTS
was working hard to address this issue but was uncertain of how soon it would succeed in increasing minority recruitment.

**Disappointment.** A number of participants expressed concerns over the disappointment of people who did not pass National Board Certification. "I know a guy whose mother went through it and she is phenomenal, but she didn’t get it," stated Ken. "It has crushed her to the point where she doesn’t want to go through it again." Phil reflected, "If accomplished teachers don’t get the [NBPTS] stamp of approval, it actually… [discourages] others… from going after it." Alicia recalled her worry over a friend who also sought National Board certification at the same time. "I was really worried about it -- not that I didn’t think she would get certification…. We had made a pact… that if one of us gets it and the other one doesn’t, we’re not going to feel awkward…. I didn’t want to deal with that.”

**Jealousy.** All participants who achieved National Board Certification reported concerns of jealousy from peers. Catrine worried, “Once it’s made public, you find people who try to see something you’re not doing… or make snide little comments.” Alicia recalled her disappointment when fellow staff did not offer to cover her students when she was invited to a NBPTS luncheon. "I felt unsupported," she remembered. "People can’t just be happy for you.”

**Teacher Attrition.** Many participants who achieved National Board Certification noted that myriad job opportunities outside of their current classroom assignments had suddenly become available. Mitch was concerned,
In the district, they turn to you and say, “Can you do this? Would you do that?”... It all starts to be a drain. After all, you did this because you are a good teacher.... Now they want you out of the classroom every ten seconds.

Alicia agreed, “I wanted to grow and be recognized but stay in the classroom.”

Summary of “NBPTS Experience”

- Participants agreed unanimously with the value of the NBPTS’s five core propositions that help to define accomplished teaching.
- Participants from both groups who chose to seek National Board Certification reported that they were motivated by the desire to receive national validation and increased recognition of their teaching abilities.
- Participants who successfully achieved National Board Certification were more motivated by the opportunity for self-challenge and comparison than those who did not achieve certification.
- Participants who did not achieve NBPTS certification were more motivated by increased income and broadened job opportunities than their NBPTS-certified successful counterparts.
- Participants who completed application to the NBPTS unanimously felt that they had enhanced reflective skills and enjoyed some degree of validation of their teaching abilities.
- Participants who did not choose to seek National Board Certification cited reasons such as fear of time commitment, drawing attention to oneself, competition, poor timing in their career, and having costs outweighing the benefits.
Participants who successfully achieved National Board Certification unanimously maintained an attitude of trust toward the NBPTS’s assessment process.

Participants who did not secure certification tended to doubt the credibility or validity of the NBPTS’s assessment process.

Participants who achieved National Board Certification frequently experienced peer jealousy.

Participants who achieved National Board Certification worried that the NBPTS often enticed accomplished teachers to leave the classroom in pursuit of broader job opportunities.

Implications for Change

Findings demonstrated that teachers’ beliefs and attitudes toward their professional roles had a large impact on future work-related aspirations. Table 5.10 shows the four categories of change that participants anticipated for their professional futures.
Participants' strong opinions hinted that holistic education is the wave of the future for America's schools. Participants agreed that today's American education system must move beyond simply serving the academic needs of students into addressing students' ever-increasing social and emotional concerns. "It's important to be concerned about...the whole child; not just a [classroom] subject," stated Catrine. "If they come to school hungry, they're not necessarily going to be able to learn." Demonstrating his new awareness for meeting the holistic needs of children, David added, "My [master's program]...taught me a lot about engaging children completely -- the mind, the heart, and the hand." He said holistic education would play an increasingly important role in America's education system.
Urban teachers, Alicia, Catrine, David, Ken, Mindy, Phil, and Tanya, all affirmed the importance of schools to addressing students' cultural and family needs. Said Tanya, I think sometimes in order to educate a child, you have to educate a family. You have to be willing to go into their homes and model lessons.... Last year as a Caucasian teacher in a predominantly African-American school, I almost had to become bicultural. I had to learn as much about the culture as I could because if you are asked to go and be a part of their community at any time, you should be able to function in it.

Catrine also frequently visited her students' homes to model appropriate teaching practices, as well as to make what she considered to be vital connections between the school and home.

Other participants shared similar sentiments regarding attending to their students as a whole rather than simply academically. “You don’t earn this paycheck because you walk in the door,” asserted Jacqui, “You earn your paycheck because you care about what you’re doing, and you put forth that effort to really make an impact [on children]. If you can’t do it educationally, you can do it emotionally.” With her fifth graders, Tess aspired for her students to feel “nothing but a positive success out of the year.... To be motivated because they felt positive about challenging themselves to learn.”

Four participants emphasized the importance of high standards in the education of each and every student. Trina, Ken, Mindy, and Jacqui often returned to this theme when discussing how education should be administered. Trina, having worked many years in a special education setting, eagerly volunteered, “I believe that no matter what [students]...
bring to the classroom, any child can learn.” Ken added, “I’m very clear about my expectations with children and they’re very high…. I don’t allow them to say ‘I can’t.’”

**Teacher Growth**

Many times throughout the study, participants described how they had changed over the course of their teaching careers. These changes included reflective habits, professional development preferences, teaching methods, leadership roles, and global awareness.

**Reflective Habits.** The frequently cited change across cases was in the area of reflection. Ken, Mindy, Alicia, Jacqui & Lydia reported that as they gained experience, they also grew in their depth and frequency of reflection. Ken recalled his early career, “So much depends on where one is…in the stage of the career…. The first five years…people are busy trying to survive so they don’t have a chance to kick into the reflective mode.”

**Professional Development Preferences.** Alicia, Jacqui and Lydia noted that the type of in-services and on-going training that teachers need today is constantly changing. Said Jacqui, “Your first few years teaching, I don’t think you ever look at any books on teaching because you’re so overwhelmed. Now that I’ve been teaching awhile, I actually look at textbooks and say, “This one…has some good strategies in it.”” Alicia also noted that her views toward professional development have changed.

Whereas I used to care about getting AIMS books [teacher activity books], I now think about resources to *improve* my teaching…ways for me to think about *why* I
do what I do instead of worksheets and testing. I hardly ever give worksheets any more compared to when I first started teaching.

Lydia shared similar sentiments toward professional development. “When I first started teaching I thought all of those little ‘Make-Take It’ workshops were so great because I was just struggling to survive.” She contrasted her earlier professional development with the qualities of what she currently desired. “It is all cutting edge! Makes your brain think instead of ‘This is what you’re doing and this is how you’re doing it.’”

Methods. Four participants believed that their pedagogy had improved over the years. Catrine, David, Mindy and Paula recounted how their methods have changed to better meet students’ needs. Catrine and Paula, both veteran elementary teachers, related their journey toward increased use of developmentally appropriate teaching. Confided Paula, “I didn’t have a master’s degree. I believed that direct teaching was it — you lectured and they wrote.” Describing how her local university’s master’s program impacted her, she declared, “I just absolutely changed. When I think of my reading groups 20 years ago and the reading groups now, where we write and talk and laugh about the story, it’s almost diametrically opposed.” Paula also credited changing methods to her experience and age.

Because of my age, I look at my children as a person who is developing; not as a person who has to be this tomorrow or that next week. I think learning [for students] is a process and I don’t think I believed that at first.

Catrine also reviewed some of the changes that occurred between her initial teaching experience and today. “I had already started forming my own philosophy as a
young 22 year-old...I had this philosophy that they [students] need academics and play...I was afraid that I would not be liked very well.” However, as Catrine began to teach she found that her philosophy was strengthened. She supported early childhood program initiatives throughout her district that taught developmentally appropriate practice, and later went on to act as a leader for many of these programs.

**Leadership.** Both Alicia and Leah spoke of their growing desire to provide guidance to others in their field. Leah reflected on her motivation, “I used to feel all I needed to do was learn more to become better. Now I recognize that I learn best when also offering to others. It is a cyclical process that I deeply value about teaching.”

Alicia, too, expressed positive feelings toward the reciprocal benefits of providing leadership. “Over the past few years, I have been in more leadership positions in my school...working on building-wide educational issues.” Alicia shared her satisfaction with the investment of her efforts. “My administrator and teammates have given me validation and encouragement and lots of positive feedback.”

**Global Awareness.** Trina and Tanya felt that their cultural reference had broadened as a result of teaching. Tanya, a Caucasian teacher, discussed her growing sensitivity to the variety of cultures represented in her classroom “When I started teaching at an all-Black school, I started realizing that I almost had to become bicultural.”

Likewise, Trina observed, “I see myself more globally now. I was isolated in my beliefs before. I looked at my classroom only. Now I look at the school and community alongside my students.”
Career Aspirations

A large number of participants possessed similar aspirations for future work in the field of education. Table 5.11 demonstrates these preferences.

When examining Table 5.11, it is interesting to note that primarily those two groups of participants who chose to seek National Board Certification possessed the vast majority of respondents interested in pursuing advanced certification and degrees in areas of educational leadership. Only 20 percent of the participants who chose to apply for National Board Certification anticipated remaining in the classroom until retirement. All National Board participants, excluding Catrine and Lydia, looked forward to pursuing educational leadership positions that would eventually move them out of their current teaching positions into either administrative or adult instructional settings.

By contrast, 80 percent of participants who did not choose to seek National Board Certification planned to remain in the classroom rather than move to other positions. The one exception, Chad believed that he would eventually secure his administrative certification and one day become a principal.
Table 5.11: Participants' Career Aspirations

Professionalizing Teaching

Each participant offered numerous suggestions for further improving the respectability and status of teaching both within the world of education and in the broader public. The following is a compilation of their recommendations.

**Salary.** Others debated whether teachers deserved an increase in pay.

Commenting on societal status, Mitch interjected, "Unfortunately…most important is interest in money. We [teachers] just don’t stack up [financially]!" David asserted, "I
think...if I were getting paid more, people would respect me more. Ken agreed, “[salaries] should be higher.... The more development you get, the more your pay should be increased.... We should be treated like professionals.”

In stark contrast to the others, Lydia expressed satisfaction with her salary. “It's not as much as being an attorney...but attorneys and other professionals often work...even more hours than we do.”

**Respectability.** Phil, Paula and Chad stated that educators must assume an air of professionalism and respectability in order to improve their professional status. Phil asserted, “We are who we perceive ourselves to be. If you carry yourself as a confident professional, you’ll be treated as a confident professional.” Paula concurred, “To act like a professional, you’re proud of what you do. You’re competent and secure in what you do. You can say, ‘I do a good job. I work hard!’” Chad concluded, “Just do your job... People are going to see the real you for you.”

**Competency.** Participants agreed that in order for the public to view teachers with greater respect, educators must attend rigorous training programs to master content knowledge and methods for working with students. Alicia touted the value of “higher standards for training programs.” Lydia insisted, “We [educators] need the best and the brightest; not just people who just want...their summers off.”

Others believed that teachers must be thoroughly knowledgeable in the field. “We can bring respect by being prepared,” shared Ken. “If you know that is not a subject where you are competent...then go out and get the resources to prepare yourself.” David added, “Commit yourself to a vocation...understand why you’re doing what you’re doing.... Be ready and able to talk with people about [it].”
**Political Advocacy.** Another group of participants encourage educators to become advocates for the profession. “We need to ban together and say ‘we need standards,’” stated Ken. “We need to take control of our own profession…. We can’t keep letting legislators tell us what we need to do.” Jacqui agreed, “We have to have a strong teaching opinion about what we believe and our teaching methods…. We have to be able to defend ourselves. That goes a long way in being a professional.” Tanya added, “That’s the only way that we’re going to get true credibility for our profession…for other people to respect…and understand what we do…and how difficult the process is.”

**National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.** Finally, participants from all groups viewed the NBPTS as a positive vehicle for promoting teacher professionalism. “I believe that it will transform [the educational system] because of the nice fit between National Board, Pathwise, and the Praxis exam,” said Mitch. Lydia agreed, “National Board defines…[professional standards] so nicely.” Mindy shared her own experience with the NBPTS. “I was pulled in by the reasons for the National Board…to raise the way that people see teachers… and to raise the standards for teachers.” Tess, a participant who did not choose to seek National Board Certification, looked toward the NBPTS as enabling “teachers [to]… make the difference that’s needed in education.”

**Summary of “Implications for Change”**

- Participants agreed that future educators must possess the ability to skillfully address not only students’ academic needs but social and emotional needs as well.
• Participants believed that they had noticeably changed over the course of their teaching careers. Changes included increased reflective habits, desire for more conceptually-oriented professional development, improved teaching methods, increased leadership roles, and expanded global awareness.

• Participants who sought National Board certification expressed greater interest in pursuing advanced certification and degrees than those participants who did not choose to seek National Board Certification.

• Participants who did not choose to seek National Board Certification generally looked forward to future careers in a classroom setting similar to their current environment.

• Participants believed that the status of America's teachers can improve through increased self-respect, teacher competency, political advocacy, better salaries, and efforts to further professionalize the field of teaching through organizations such as the NBPTS that codify and publicize the qualities of accomplished educators.

Chapter 5 Summary

Chapter 5 has compared the data collected from 15 individual participants across cases. Significant similarities and differences emerged as a result of conducting an analysis of narratives. The significance and implications of these findings, as well as those in Chapter 4, will be presented in the discussion chapter to follow.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

Chapter 6 will discuss answers to the three research questions. It will present significant findings from the study and compare them to the broader literature. Next, it will compare findings across the three participant groups. Recommendations for those findings and questions for future research will also be included. A methodological reflection exploring the researcher's subjectivity and efforts to ensure trustworthiness will follow. The chapter will close with implications addressing the overall study.

In contrast to Chapters 4 and 5 where participants’ belief systems were presented in their own words while purposefully limiting the researcher’s voice, Chapter 6 makes central the researcher’s own understandings, voice, and inferences from the study.

Research Questions

As the study progressed, it became apparent that participants were most interested in sharing information related to their own unique belief systems (research question #1). While participants were willing to share their views on the NBPTS’s core propositions (research question #2), I found their perceptions of the NBPTS to be highly influenced by
their belief systems perspective. Similarly, information regarding how participants sought validation of their professional roles (research question #3) flowed naturally during discussions of their beliefs, attitudes, and values toward professional roles.

Originally, because of the extended pilot study data I had gathered, as well as the literature review I had conducted on belief systems theory, teacher validation, and the NBPTS, I anticipated participants’ interests would fall equally across the three research topics. Instead, as the study evolved, I realized that the belief systems question was emerging as an all-encompassing primary research question. The other two questions, related to participants’ views of the NBPTS and ways of seeking validation, proved to be secondary research questions for the study.

Many key themes and patterns of interest surfaced across participant belief systems. From this data, a master chart of five main categories of discussion was created (see Table 5.1). A synthesis of these findings, comparisons to the literature review, recommendations for further research, implications for program and policy development, and conclusions are presented in the following section organized around the research questions.

What Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values do Participants Hold Toward Their Roles as Professional Educators in the Classroom, School, and Wider Community?

In this study, Rokeach’s (1968) belief systems theory was utilized to develop questions targeting participants’ beliefs, attitudes, and values toward their professional roles. The findings were then carefully presented as a whole in Chapter 4’s Narrative Analysis and later analyzed across groups in Chapter 5’s Analysis of Narratives. The
review of literature in Chapter 2 presented a microcosmic glimpse of U.S. educators’ inherent and universal struggles to “come to terms” with their professional identities. This upheaval closely paralleled the widespread criticism leveled at education throughout the United States during the 1980s and led to an identity crisis for many U.S. teaching institutes. That criticism ultimately became a professional mandate to define, codify, and solidify the professional body of knowledge that constituted teaching excellence.

According to Sykes and Wilson (1998), philosophical and theoretical notions of accomplished teaching in the United States varied widely across teacher preparation institutions, schools, and individual teachers. As a result of this lack of consensus regarding the qualities of teaching excellence, educators often struggled in isolated roles that did not easily lend themselves toward professional collaboration or a collective identity (Doyle & Hartle, 1985, Rotberg et al, 1998). Instead, curriculum input and development were often placed in the hands of forces working outside of the classroom, leaving teachers with disenfranchised attitudes toward their professional responsibilities (Cascio, 1995).

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) emerged in the late 1980s to address the lack of professional identity and unity plaguing the field of teaching (Zemelman et al., 1998). According to the NBPTS (1991), its efforts to codify high standards of pedagogical skill and professional excellence would help to empower and enhance the education profession as a whole. The benefits were to include increased professional accountability, greater professional expertise, and enhanced public status for teachers.
The idea for this study originated as a result of the writer's own interactions with a National Board-Certified teacher who was concerned that educators were often disempowered by the systems in which they worked. She frequently suggested that the increasing numbers of National Board-Certified teachers might hold the key to empowering fellow teachers through professional reform. Mindful of the NBPTS's goal to heighten educator unity and professionalism through teacher-driven standards of accomplishment, this study was designed to examine the applicability of the NBPTS's core propositions toward three groups of educators' belief systems.

Participants were first questioned regarding their own belief systems in the absence of direct discussion about the NBPTS. It wasn't until the latter part of each in-depth interview that participants were asked to compare and contrast their own belief systems with the tenets of accomplished teaching set forth by the NBPTS.

I approached this study expecting to find three groups of educators with high degrees of commonality within groups, in contrast to anticipating broad differences across groups. From pilot-study interviews, two major areas of discussion were continually initiated by participants and were thus included as research questions: (1) How do participants' beliefs, attitudes, and values support or challenge the five core propositions for accomplished teaching established by the NBPTS? and (2) In what ways and for what reasons do participants seek to validate their belief systems regarding their roles as professional educators? I was surprised to find that a great deal more similarity existed across groups than I originally anticipated.

In-depth individual interviews, group discussions, and surveys revealed a number of distinct ways in which the three groups of educators codified and prioritized their
belief systems. In reading the narrative analyses written for each participant in Chapter 4, one gains a holistic view of the individual's belief systems. In Chapter 5, five major categories emerged that were closely related to participants' professional belief systems (see Table 5.1): Key Influences on Teaching, Attitudes/Values Toward the Profession, Tensions of Teaching, NBPTS Experience, and Implications for Change. The remainder of this section is organized according to these five categories.

**Key Influences on Teaching.** To uncover participants' predispositions toward behaviors surrounding their professional role, the writer asked questions related to what they believed were key influences on their teaching style. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and belief systems theory (Rokeach, 1968) recognize the vital impact of culture on the acquisition and organization of belief systems. Participants described family values, memorable childhood experiences, personal learning styles, and schooling experiences as major influences on how they approached their professional roles.

Study observations confirmed what the social learning theorists had proposed: that foundations for belief systems are formed early in life. In addition, the earlier a concept is learned, especially from someone with whom the learner is most familiar, the greater the resistance will be toward changing that belief (Bruner, 1966). While participants viewed their family and childhood memories as a primarily positive influence on their teaching approaches, most participants complained that undergraduate training did not provide adequate preparation for entering their first teaching position.

These findings imply that teacher training institutions need to recognize students' concerns regarding quality teaching early in their training programs, in order to more effectively design programs that cause educators to examine and adjust their own belief
systems. Based upon their own years of schooling, young teachers often enter the classroom with myriad assumptions regarding the "correct" ways to interact with students (Pankratius & Young, 1995). If colleges and universities would familiarize themselves with students' patterns of beliefs and experiences acquired prior to attending their teacher training programs, the institutions could undoubtedly better address participants' desire to balance transmission of learning theory with more practical undergraduate and graduate teaching methods (Pajares, 1992).

Because many educators' beliefs about their teacher's roles were constructed during childhood, these stubborn perceptions present a hurdle to teacher educators seeking to expand or challenge the ways in which teachers view their own roles as professional educators. A few principles for change must be considered by undergraduate- and graduate-level instructors when asking students to reflect on and challenge their belief systems (Richardson & Calfe, 1994).

- Teachers adjust beliefs only after they change behavior and are rewarded with a positive outcome.
- Changes in belief and attitude precede changes in values and behavior.
- The process of changing beliefs and behaviors is interactive.

If teacher-training institutions would take these principles into consideration for expanding educator belief systems, perhaps undergraduate and graduate training programs would be perceived less as a hoop-jumping event and more as a practical source for professional renewal.

Finally, it is interesting to note that a recent Public Agenda poll in the United States (Wadsworth, 2000) reveals that most new teachers [those who have taught less
than five years] report feeling adequately prepared to meet the rigors of teaching. Perhaps undergraduate training institutions are beginning to better meet the growing demands of training new teachers by taking into account the myriad of influences that effect their beliefs.

**Attitude/Values Toward Profession.** Findings in this category matched closely with those findings presented in Chapter Two’s Literature Review. Participants described similar reasons for both entering and remaining in teaching. The motivation to contribute to society by engaging in meaningful work with students was evident throughout most participants’ careers. According to Wadsworth’s 1997 findings, the majority of new educators bring to teaching “[an] enthusiasm, commitment, and a real desire to improve the lives of the children they teach” (p. 9, Raspberry, 2000). If new teachers are entering their field with such optimism, how does one account for the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future’s recent study that shows nearly 30 percent of new teachers leaving the field of education within the first five years of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Research must look further into the issues that account for the disturbing attrition rate among new teachers.

Similar to research which has shown that educators commonly model their pedagogical technique after those they have observed teaching (Cruickshank et al, 1996), study participants overwhelmingly justified their classroom methods by utilizing similar approaches to their former teaching mentors. The findings suggest vital implications for teacher-training institutions. These institutions hold a great deal of potential for strengthening young teachers’ preparation by providing pedagogical models in college/university professors. Innovative research has been conducted to carefully
examine the value of college/university pedagogical models of accomplished teaching for students, while at the same time providing a strong content-knowledge foundation (Cruickshank et al, 1996; Diamond, 1989; Shulman, 1986). If new teachers are expected to utilize principles of accomplished teaching within their own practice, then the programs guiding their teaching must reflect those principles as well (Kaufman, 1996).

Participants' opinions of the NBPTS's core propositions were also assigned to this category. However, for purposes of clarity in discussing findings, a reflection on this sub-category is presented in the discussion of research question two.

**Tensions of Teaching.** This category unexpectedly provided the broadest and richest sources of discussion with participants. At first the tensions of teaching were not anticipated to become a major category in the data. However, it soon became apparent that more than any other participant-initiated theme, participants would repeatedly voice concerns and tensions related to their profession. Even though a focus on the tensions of teaching was not originally anticipated, the category quickly grew into one of the five major foci of the study.

Obviously frustrated, participants cited numerous examples of stress that extended across all three study groups. They expressed concerns ranging from increasingly needy students, to the lack of dialogue and unity surrounding quality teaching practices, to isolation and competition between staff members, peer jealousy, distrust of evaluatory measures, negative media coverage, and a general perception of low status compared to other professions with equal years of educational training.

Supporting participants' concerns, the literature review unanimously echoed the above sources of stress to educators: misconceptions of quality teaching (NBPTS, 1991);
To address these numerous tensions, participants suggested a variety of solutions. As a group, most believed that they must assume a more holistic role towards needy students. Rather than expecting to address only the academic needs of children, they felt that educators must be willing to meet the students' social and emotional needs as well. Next, all participants looked toward the NBPTS as a potential solution for codifying the skills that accomplished teachers possess. Generally, they felt that unifying and codifying the body of knowledge, skills, and dispositions possessed by excellent educators would actually help to combat the lack of unity that frequently characterizes teaching staffs. Similarly, most believed that teachers themselves, rather than administrators, must make a concerted effort to develop trust among peers by opening dialogue. Participants felt that this would result in increased acceptance of recognition for teaching excellence and decreased peer jealousy. Finally, participants recommended that by addressing these tensions head-on as a team, teacher self-esteem and professional status would rise.

A number of questions remain. What are the most successful models of professional unity among teachers? How can educators begin to transition schools of hostile and isolated work environments into positive institutions supporting employees'
professional growth? The answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this study but are in dire need of further attention.

**NBPTS Experience.** This category presented the broadest differences across participant groups. With respect to motivations for pursuing National Board Certification, there were distinct differences cited by the two National Board groups. Both groups were motivated by the desire to receive national validation and increased recognition of their teaching abilities. However, those who successfully attained certification were more motivated by the self-challenge and opportunity for national comparison than those who did not receive certification. Also, the latter group was focused more on increased income and broadened job opportunities. These findings pose further questions for research. Given the opportunity to study a much broader selection of candidates -- might a relationship exist between NBPTS participants’ motivations for pursuing National Board Certification and their rate of success?

Throughout my readings, I was unable to locate data from the NBPTS or any other resource that explored National Board candidates’ motivations in applying for certification. The benefits of generating such a body of research from this study are, therefore, significant in that respect. They provide insight into National Board mentors and instructors, who desire to codify a profile of the successful applicant. In a past study (Covert, 1999), I conducted numerous interviews with assessors, trainers, candidates, and administrators to gather views on possible reasons for the “secrets” of National Board candidates’ success. They argued the need for a district-wide NBPTS support system, in which administration provides release days for candidate work, technical assistance, encouragement, and recognition of candidates who are going through the certification
process. Successful candidates told of attending monthly support groups, in which a mentor encouraged and guided them through the lengthy application process. In particular, mentors cited the value of the extra support they were able to provide candidates by modeling the differences between analytic, descriptive, and reflective forms of writing. Mentors pointed out the ability to differentiate between these three forms of writing has proven to be difficult for many candidates and has often been blamed for a candidate’s inability to acquire certification.

The benefits of applying for National Board Certification appear to be intrinsic and many, regardless of whether or not one succeeds in becoming certified. Both the study participants and the research literature contend that candidates who go through the NBPTS’s process overwhelmingly increase their reflective abilities (Buday & Kelly, 1996). Candidates also credited the application process for increasing their ability to accurately interpret and address students’ learning needs (Kowalski, 1997). Teachers often reported surprise at their ability to articulate implicit educational understandings (Tracz et al, 1995).

In spite of ostensibly noble aims, the NBPTS certification program represents a far-from-perfect process. Criticisms have been leveled charging bias and inflexibility from successful and unsuccessful candidates, educational scholars, and various professional groups. In addition, historically, there has been a preponderance of white female candidates and a shortage of male and minority candidates, presenting a recruiting imbalance.

There are other subtle, yet troublesome problems with NBPTS certification. The process itself is demanding, challenging, involved, and not inexpensive. And, the
problems of faultfinding do not end with certification. When one candidate successfully attains certification and another colleague fails to do so, peer jealousy often develops. This leads to staff morale problems. Literature recognized this phenomenon as a noticeable drop in collegial spirit when one staff member became certified and another did not (Chittendon & Jones, 1997; Wright, 1990). Clearly, for the betterment of the profession, teachers must work together to address these issues and to encourage high standards of achievement.

Several study participants voiced strong concern over the NBPTS’s ability/inability to properly evaluate educators’ accomplishments, especially the study participants who failed to achieve certification. These candidates tended to doubt the credibility and/or validity of the NBPTS’s assessment measures and process. In particular, they called into question the NBPTS’s unyielding requirement for articulate writing in the assessment phase of certification. Study participants specifically complained that they had difficulty with the written portion of the certification process, arguing that a truly valid teaching assessment would allow performance-based and oral factors to offset minor writing deficiencies. Yinger referred to this issue as "the decontextualized/written world of the National Board Candidate (Yinger, 1999)." In the final analysis, these concerns suggest that the NBPTS may be inappropriately evaluating the “articulateness” of teachers rather than the expertise of their actual classroom-based practice (Ballou & Podgursky, 1994; Burroughs et al., 2000; King, 1994)."

One study participant, Phil, advocated that assessment measures be broadened to include examples of student achievement from standardized tests. In fact, research has echoed this idea, asserting that the NBPTS has focused on increasing teacher knowledge
while failing to assure student learning (Spicer, 1997). Some critics have even expressed concern that the NBPTS may not be identifying those who truly are excellent teachers (Roach, 1992).

An additional NBPTS concern is scoring. Many participants puzzled over receiving high scores from the NBPTS in areas they considered themselves to be the least proficient. In addition, they often reported earning failing scores in areas they considered themselves to be expert. Similarly, many participants complained of receiving unexplained low scores on computer assessment sections of the test.

Study participants offered their opinions as to why these apparent discrepancies occurred. They suggested that the NBPTS might have failed to consider the distinctive communication styles many effective urban and minority educators utilize to meet their students' needs. In addition, they worried that the NBPTS did not take into account the differing social/academic contexts in which many urban and minority educators work, compared to their suburban counterparts. In fact, and unfortunately, research has substantiated this concern in finding that both race and school location remain accurate predictors of candidate success (Moore, 1999). It has been found that candidates from both urban and rural districts were less likely than their suburban counterparts to succeed in achieving NBPTS certification. Further, research has shown that African-American candidates were less likely to achieve certification than other candidates (Burroughs et al., 2000). Why are these discrepancies in scores emerging across participants? These are also issues that need further exploration.

Change. Participants said they felt that they had grown and changed in both pedagogical methods and professional views during their years of teaching. Changes
included greater reflective habits, increased desire for more conceptually oriented professional development, improved teaching methods, increased leadership roles, and expanded global awareness.

They generally viewed their professional futures with eager anticipation. Interestingly, while the two groups who sought National Board Certification expressed the desire to pursue advanced degrees that would later lead them out of the classroom, the non-National Board group generally looked forward to a future in the classroom. Given the newness of National Board Certification, it is too soon to make any meaningful comparisons of career profiles of National Board versus non-National Board teachers.

Finally, participants universally expressed a desire to improve the professional status of teachers throughout the United States. They agreed that teacher status would be best heightened by developing increased self-respect, teacher competency, political advocacy, better salaries, and by furthering efforts to professionalize the field of education. All study participants, including those who chose to seek National Board Certification and those who did not, believed the NBPTS has very strong potential to assist in the sorely needed professional revolution in teaching.

How do Participants' Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values Support or Challenge the Five Core Propositions for Accomplished Teaching Established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?

This research question proved to be a sub-category of the major belief systems question explored previously. While it may be more accurate to report responses to this particular question in the Attitudes/Values category above, for purposes of clarity in
relating the discussion to Chapter One’s three original research questions, I have chosen to answer this sub-question separately.

Participants were asked to create a list of five top personal/professional qualities they believed constituted accomplished teaching. In the main, they described educators who were primarily reflective, continuing learners, risk-takers, and effective with all students. Curiously, the majority of the NBPTS-candidate group did not list reflection as a top priority. It is plausible that this group may have assumed that reflection was an important teaching characteristic that was already implied in all areas of accomplished teaching and did not need mentioned. However, this issue warrants further exploration. Interestingly, only the National Board participants ranked being knowledgeable in content area and learning theories in their top five qualities. In contrast, the non-National Board group prioritized an attitude of caring and respect for students and peers even above the importance of content and learning theory knowledge. Further down on their lists they, too, included the importance of content and learning-theory knowledge. This information was then compared to the NBPTS’s (1991) five core propositions:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience, and
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.
While each participant did not necessarily list their beliefs for teacher accomplishment in an identical manner to NBPTS’s core propositions, focus group discussions revealed that participants agreed that the propositions were accurate and inclusive.

The NBPTS’s propositions have not been without criticism from the broader public. In 1993, Josefsberg criticized the NBPTS for inappropriately attempting to standardize teacher professionalism with principles that were applicable in the lives of only an elite group of teachers. While participants in the study made no such accusations toward the NBPTS, a number mentioned that while the organization defended against the accusation, they did in fact abide by a particular pedagogical philosophy to which candidates must adhere in order to become certified. They recognized that this might be problematic for teachers with more traditional approaches to teaching. Nevertheless, a majority of participants, as well as the literature, praised the NBPTS for accurately codifying the body of knowledge, skills, and dispositions possessed by accomplished teachers (Tracz et al, 1995).

Given the fact that virtually all participants involved in this study agreed with the NBPTS’s core propositions for accomplished teaching, it would be enlightening to conduct a large-scale investigation regarding a broad range of educators’ perceptions of the NBPTS’s ability to accurately codify and unite teachers nationally as a professional body. The promise of the NBPTS’s initiatives may hold significance for all teachers, whether they choose to pursue National Board Certification or not. For the first time in United States’s history, seasoned educators have the opportunity to rally around professional principles that potentially represent a national consensus for accomplished
teaching. Further research will determine whether educators are most likely to choose the NBPTS as a major vehicle for educational renewal.

**In What Ways and for What Reasons do Participants Seek to Validate Their Belief Systems Regarding Their Roles as Professional Educators?**

Broad differences existed between participant groups when determining the ways in which they preferred to receive validation of their teaching abilities. Each of the National Board groups expressed the desire to receive both informal and formal recognition from fellow teachers, administrators, the public, institutions, and the media. Participants repeatedly requested greater informal validation of their teaching abilities from the above sources through: increased discussion of teaching performance; letters of feedback; increased professional involvement with those outside the school, and more well rounded media coverage. They desired formal recognition through public praise; detailed and longitudinal evaluations; school-wide publications; opportunities for leadership, and publicized teaching awards.

By contrast, the group that chose not to seek National Board Certification generally dreaded the idea of receiving *formal* recognition of their teaching ability. Instead, they were primarily satisfied with less formal means of validation; particularly parental and student feedback. While one participant claimed that his work performance increased as a result of receiving informal recognition and praise for excellent work from administrators and peers, others were equally motivated to avoid such attention. A number of teachers named peer jealousy as the reason that they avoided more formal recognition.
This information could be helpful to researchers compiling personality composites of educators most likely to enhance workplace performance by receiving formal or informal recognition. The findings in this study suggest that those participants who chose to seek National Board Certification considered themselves to be in need of increased formal recognition. However, those who did not choose to seek National Board Certification preferred mostly informal means of recognition to maintain their workplace performance.

These findings may aid administrators and fellow teachers in identifying the best ways to motivate and support particular types of educators to ultimately improve performance and job satisfaction. While administrators and fellow teachers generally may be hesitant in singling out particular educators for outstanding performance, they may find that they are, in fact, performing a disservice to some of their most effective teachers. By failing to recognize outstanding teaching and exemplary performance, systems and institutions may actually lose those teachers desiring more formal means of validation and recognition, as these individuals may seek reward elsewhere. Also, participants’ concern that National Board-Certified teachers are increasingly enticed to leave their classrooms in pursuit of careers with the NBPTS or other organizations may be indicative of a larger problem with teacher job satisfaction in the United States. These issues must be researched further.

While many participants felt that increased attention should be given to those teachers in need of additional forms of validation, it is also important to respect the views of participants who did not feel comfortable in what they perceived as “the spotlight.” Primarily those teachers who did not choose to seek National Board Certification.
suggested that they were content with positive parental and public feedback through conversations and positive publicity. Many even suggested that formal validation could be counterproductive to promoting teamwork and unity among staff members. Further research into this area could assist educators in recognizing the underlying forces surrounding jealousy and competition that participants widely described in their schools.

These findings, while representative of only a very small sample of teachers, suggest that educators may have a variety of distinct perspectives toward desirable forms of validation and recognition. It is important that researchers look further into finding ways to identify the unique and appropriate forms of validation desired by individual educators in order to enhance teacher job satisfaction and performance.

Comparison of Participant Groups

Study participants revealed a number of common patterns of response within their respective groups. Significant differences across groups became apparent in the following perspectives: how they prioritized the qualities of accomplished teaching; their preferences for professional validation, and their reasons for seeking or not seeking National Board Certification.

Priorities

While all three groups characterized accomplished educators as reflective, continuing learners, and risk-takers in their lists of top five desirable qualities, only those groups that chose to seek National Board Certification made room for knowledge of content and learning theory on their list. By comparison, the group that did not choose to
seek National Board Certification prioritized attitudes of caring and respect towards students and peers, with knowledge of content area and learning theory trailing behind.

This knowledge may assist researchers in compiling a profile of the teachers who are most likely to seek National Board Certification. Those teachers who are most focused on academic learning, such as broadening their knowledge base in both content area and learning theory, may be more likely to apply for National Board Certification than those teachers who prefer to focus mostly on caring for students and peers.

Interestingly, the views on education reform between the two participant groups are currently mirrored in large-scale debates across the general public. In Deborah Meier’s timely book, *Will Standards Save Public Education?* (2000), she argues that teachers and local citizens should determine educational standards for their communities rather than looking to large-scale and impersonal centralized authority figures. She warns that broad standardization efforts are to blame for preventing students, teachers, and the public from forging close-knit caring relationships and becoming reflective and responsible citizens who are seriously engaged in shaping communities. In her book, she includes opposing perspectives from various professors, administrators, and researchers, who advocate state and national standards to ensure equality of resources and minimal levels of national competencies, which they believe are necessary (Murnane, 2000; Nash, 2000).

These findings suggest that further dialogue among educators is needed to share the value of emphasizing both a caring attitude toward working with students and the value of enhancing teaching methods.
Validation

Significant differences existed between National Board and non-National Board participants related to their views on formal and informal validation. Findings for this category were reported above in the discussion of Research Question Number Three.

National Board Certification

The two participant groups that chose to seek National Board Certification reported doing so primarily to receive formal and national recognition of their teaching abilities. However, an important distinction emerged between the secondary motivators of each group. The group that succeeded in receiving National Board Certification ranked a desire for self-challenge and peer comparison as a second important motivator. By contrast, the group that did not receive certification identified the desire to open doors to future job opportunities as their secondary goal.

Given the opportunity to perform a similar study on a much larger scale, these findings may help to further inform the personality profiles of both certified and uncertified National Board candidates. By looking at the factors that typically motivate a National Board candidate to go through the rigorous application process, one may be able to customize National Board support programs to recognize, recruit and support candidates who are most likely to succeed in the process.

Recommendations

The experience of these 15 participants signals the need for continued reform efforts in teacher training programs and educator workplaces. Participants characterized
the daily life of the professional educator as interspersed with intense periods of joyous altruism combined with dark periods of professional frustration and loneliness. While new educators approach their careers eager to make a difference in the lives of their students and to join a meaningful profession, it is no surprise that they soon admit to feeling overwhelmed by job pressures, and have few places to turn for guidance and support within their schools (Wadsworth, 2000).

Teacher training programs should consider the strong impact that past models of teaching have had on new teachers' pedagogical styles (Diamond, 1989). These institutions could thus gain meaningful insight into their programs by helping would-be teachers uncover implicit understandings of instructional technique their students have gained during childhood years of schooling, and by helping these teachers to reflect and analyze the pros and cons of these techniques. Likewise, college and university teacher educators might increase dialogue regarding their own widespread delivery of lecture-format lessons, thereby seizing the opportunity to model meaningful instructional techniques, as well as to provide increased field experiences to students (Diamond, 1989; Russell, 1997; Sarason, 1996).

Next, would-be teachers might be asked by training institutions to carefully consider their reasons for entering the field of education. Providing students with personality inventories, career-path assessments and in-depth field experiences early in their college years, may better guide young people toward both personally and professionally satisfying careers. As many of the participants echoed, teaching should be considered a career, not simply a job. The business of working intimately with young people requires more than expert knowledge of one's field. It requires a passion and
sensitivity for working closely with young people; skills that quality educators appear to possess naturally.

During both undergraduate and graduate training, teachers could be given increased opportunities to reflect on content knowledge, learning theory, teaching methods, and their broader role within the profession. Greater opportunities for in-depth reflection and dialogue with peers must be afforded educators if they are expected to be truly competent professionals in control of their work (Brown & Rose, 1995). Recent educator licensure reform efforts of several state departments of education should help to assure that both pre-service and current teachers are exposed to cutting-edge coursework and opportunities for meaningful on-going professional development (Lewis, 1994). National reform efforts seek to align pre-service and on-going teacher training programs to assure a codified plan of success for creating and supporting skilled professionals prepared to meet the changing needs of society.

If this study is a microcosmic view representative of broader educator opinion, serious consideration should be given to the overwhelming call for teacher unity expressed by each and every participant in this study. Teachers participating in this study often described working in hostile, isolated environments totally devoid of any meaningful peer dialogue. Many concluded or deduced that the pressures of needy students, administrative orders, inappropriate evaluatory measures, feelings of powerlessness, and peer jealousy were a result of a general lack of unity prevalent among teaching staff. Even those participants who worked in environments with clear-cut instructional philosophies puzzled over the ongoing difficulties they experienced in attempting to dialogue and partner with colleagues. While some suggested that the
solution to this dilemma lay in increased administrative involvement, others believed that the answer lay in teachers taking the initiative toward teamwork themselves. Further research is warranted in this area.

Participants described a wide variety of ways in which they desired to receive validation of their teaching abilities. While some administrators and fellow teachers apparently have learned how to motivate and recognize those teachers who desire to avoid individual recognition, hopefully they will become better informed of appropriate and effective ways in which to recognize educators who prefer more formalized recognition for accomplished teaching. Both National Board participant groups wanted their administrators and fellow teachers to actively recognize and reward excellent teachers, to avoid teacher lethargy and attrition.

In the microcosm world of this study, negative media coverage was an ever-present problem. Boards of Education, schools and teachers would do well to intensify efforts toward promoting and fostering positive media relations. Rather than focusing solely on schools’ deficiencies and tragedies, media could then be courted to cover the newsworthiness of excellent teaching and student achievement occurring in schools throughout the United States. If local and national media coverage were improved, this might help to engender positive local perceptions of schools with the broader public.

Those teachers seeking National Board Certification could certainly benefit from support by administration and peers. Likewise, those teachers who do not choose to seek National Board Certification could be supported in their pursuit of alternative forms of professional development. Participants in this study expressed a hunger for increased dialogue among staff members regardless of the particular form of professional
development in which their peers chose to engage. By making the NBPTS’s core propositions better known among staffs as one model for teaching excellence, a critical dialogue may be initiated among administrators and staff. Regardless of whether an educator has chosen to seek National Board Certification or not, he/she can be made to feel a part of a learning community that participates in the development of the profession’s high standards.

In deference to the wide array of differing educational cultures and contexts within the United States, the NBPTS should look further into allegations of unfair assessment of teaching candidates and seek an equitable remedy. The NBPTS leadership should also listen carefully and sensitively to the concerns of the disproportionate numbers of urban, rural, and minority teachers who have failed to achieve National Board Certification (Burroughs et al., 2000; Moore, 1999). Further, the NBPTS would do well to address concerns of applicants who may have difficulties articulating teaching excellence through eloquent writing, but may otherwise be strong candidates. The NBPTS should find a way to recognize and reward all outstanding educators, whether or not they are skilled orators or authors. This issue also merits further research.

Teachers, administrators and institutions hopefully will give full consideration to the large number of teachers seeking National Board Certification who, given the choice, might opt to pursue career opportunities outside of the classroom. Ways should be examined to motivate skilled educators to remain passionate about staying in the classroom for the right reasons, instead of remaining because of few other career options. Finally, more and more teachers are asking to be rewarded for meritorious work with proportional salary increases and opportunities for advanced leadership.
Entering the new millennium, a new reform phenomenon is emerging in education. While teachers' professional agendas may have been sidelined by policymakers during the 1980s, educators are now stepping forward proactively as the “drivers of school reform” (Lewis, 1994, p.2; Zemelman et al., 1998). For the first time, teachers, themselves, are working to codify and publicize the qualities of accomplished teaching. And, through professional organizations such as the NBPTS, teachers are banding together to take charge of their collective professional futures -- defining the skills, knowledge and dispositions that constitute accomplished teaching (Lewis, 1994).

Self-Reflection

Methodology

Throughout the study, it was frequently apparent that discussions were a stimulus for participants to ponder, change, or extend beliefs for the first time. Often, through repeated reflection and discussions, participants were surprised at their own abilities to articulate their belief systems.

Polkinghorne’s narrative technique (1995) for data analysis complemented my goal of preserving participants’ voices in reporting and analyzing findings. I found that viewing participants collectively during the narrative analysis phase forced me to place findings in context later during the analysis of narratives phase. The natural style of writing that verbalized each narrative brought a humanness to the reporting that I felt was most appropriate for an interpretivist study. It also permitted me to maintain an increased attitude of sensitivity toward issues participants considered to be of high personal significance.
For example, by relying on repeated discussions with Phil and by triangulating his data (Webb et al., 1965), I became increasingly aware of the value of respecting participant input and guidance in developing additional questions and topics of discussion. For Phil, the reality of racial issues was a primary influence that he felt had had a major impact on his professional belief systems. I, as researcher, likely would have overlooked initiating discussions about how race influenced belief systems, because of my own narrow frame of reference as a white female, coupled with the desire to stay close to what I perceived as the focus of the study. The ability to honor Phil’s views rewarded the study with a much richer view of Phil’s belief systems than I otherwise might have gained from traditional inquiry methods.

This research was primarily conducted to “develop more sophisticated descriptions and powerful explanations” of the ways in which participants approached their professional roles (Miles & Huberman, 1994b, p. 172). A parallel to the significance of this in-depth narrative inquiry approach is captured beautifully in a quote by Eisner (1981, p.9), “To know a rose by its Latin name and yet to miss its fragrance is to miss much of the rose’s meaning.” It is my hope that this research provides a critical tool for discourse that enables others to gain a deeper appreciation of both the similar and unique beliefs, attitudes, and values of a small group of 15 teachers working to promote professionalism and reform in the field of education in highly personalized ways.

**Subjectivity**

Inevitably and unavoidably, the influence of my own belief systems impacted the design, conduct, and reporting of this study. A particular concern to me was my dual role
as a public-school educator and researcher during the time of the study. Necessarily, this meant that I was dealing with many of the same joys and frustrations of my participants. Consequently, it was often difficult to separate my own professional perspective from those of my participants. However, I conscientiously resisted the temptation to put words in participants’ mouths when they paused to answer difficult questions. In a similar vein, I struggled to recognize and discuss with peers outside the study my own reasons for conducting this research (e.g., concern for society’s efforts to recognize and validate the principles of accomplished teaching). I worried that my own professional “agenda” and critical reasons for conducting this research would taint the voices of participants. For this reason, I decided to present participants’ stories in their own words to the greatest degree possible.

**Assuring Trustworthiness**

After writing the 15 narrative analyses, member checks were conducted. In general, most participants responded with acceptance of their stories as written. Interestingly, a number of participants who accepted their analyses expressed an uneasiness seeing their words in print. Tanya commented, “I really enjoyed reading my case study. I think that I sound sort of intense; however, it really does sound like me.” Likewise, Lydia reflected, “This general tone definitely sounds like me.” Jacqui stated, “I think you wrote up everything accurately [however] reading it made me feel like I’m very negative. I don’t mean to be. I love teaching.” David echoed,

I am amazed at what you can do with an interview. I’ve never read anything like this — i.e; an interview of me! I think it communicates a lot about what I believe.
It also has parts that seem to hang there with unclear thoughts, but that probably [reflects] what I think.

Four participants asked that minor changes be made to their transcribed comments. While satisfied with the accuracy of her story, Tanya asked that certain wording be changed to reflect what she considered to be a more "politically correct" use of terms. Leah and Jacqui also revised their stories in a number of areas to clarify information. Phil initiated the greatest number of revisions and amplifications. Perhaps because of his past work as a reporter and English teacher, he thoughtfully rewrote entire sections of his narrative analysis to better clarify his belief systems. The majority of these revisions were incorporated into the final narrative analyses draft.

Because of the small sample size of this study, broad generalizations should not be extrapolated with respect to other educators in the field. The reader may assume, however, a general sense of reliability and trustworthiness from the data, which was gathered through repeated discussions with participants, triangulation of data sources, review of earlier data, and member checking of participant stories (Miles & Huberman, 1994b). Findings will be most useful in providing a better understanding of the belief systems of the 15 educators who participated in this study.

**Implications**

Participants unanimously agreed on the NBPTS's standards for accomplished teaching. However, they were most eager to discuss their own beliefs about their professional roles – particularly in those areas in which they were most frustrated. They clearly wanted an ear to listen and hungered for their voices to be heard.
The study revealed that participants were most frustrated by the lack of dialogue and teamwork that existed across many of their staffs. Although participants agreed that they were overwhelmed and stressed by common factors such as isolation and insecurity in the workplace, they often suggested solutions that were vastly different. While some participants, such as those who sought National Board Certification, attempted to join a national community of Board-Certified teachers to address their professional growth, others preferred to look for support in their more immediate surroundings (students, parents, grade-level teachers).

If the views represented in this small-scale study were to represent the education population at large, then it might be accurate to conclude that teachers believe they hold important and often untapped insights into educational reform. Research suggests that unless teachers find ways to come together in an increasingly organized manner to pose curriculum-oriented solutions to professional problems, they most likely will continue to flail in disunity and frustration while residing at the mercy of policymakers (Zemelman et al., 1998). The findings of this study imply that participants believe they must speak out against answering to accountability-oriented forces outside of the teaching profession; forces who historically have administered well-intentioned but misguided professional reform in the field of education.

Clearly, many of the educational problems and issues discussed in this paper relate to a kind of pervasive professional disunity that exists among educators systemically, across educational institutions, and even at the school-building level. To overcome this obstacle, teachers, administrators, and institutions of higher learning throughout the United States must find common ground to form an effective, unified
system for teacher career development and sustainability. The NBPTS national certification process may be one important step in that direction. In deference to major reforms promoting increased accountability and standardization in all areas of education, a continuing challenge will be to identify and respond to teachers' views for setting appropriate rigorous curriculum standards, while simultaneously meeting the diverse and continually changing needs of our dynamic, multicultural society.
LIST OF REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

Participant Permission Form
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL 
RESEARCH 
Protocol No. 99EO278 

I consent to participate in the research entitled: *Teachers' Belief Systems: A 
Comparative Analysis of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' Core 
Propositions*. I understand that the principal researcher is Dr. Evelyn Freeman from 
The Ohio State University and that Dr. Freeman is supervising the research of Julia 
Covert. 

The purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected time and 
length of the research have been explained to me. 

I know that any questions I have before, during, or after the research is completed will be 
answered by either or both of the researchers. If I have any questions I may reach Julia 
Covert by telephone (phone number) or by email <email address>. 

I know that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time. I realize that my participation 
is confidential and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my 
prior consent. My name and any details that may individually identify me will be 
changed in written reports to protect confidentiality. 

Date ______________________ 

Signature of Participant ____________________________________________ 

Signature of Principal Investigator _____________________________________ 

Signature of Co-Investigator ___________________________________________ 

Witness ____________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B

Sample Guide for Individual Interview
Individual Interview Guide

Methodology
Welcome
Introductions
Review purpose of the study
Assure confidentiality with audio recordings
Make certain that consent form was previously signed

Questions

Describe your teaching background and current professional assignment.

Tell me about the feel of the school environment in which you teach. What are you satisfied with? What would you like to see change?

How do you feel about the type of interaction and support among teachers and administrators within your building? What are you satisfied with? What would you like to see change?

What committees have you served on/leadership roles served throughout your years of teaching? What have you enjoyed or not enjoyed?

In the future, where do you see yourself in education?

If I were to observe in your classroom for an entire day, what teaching methods would I see you utilizing?

How did you come to believe that those teaching methods are the right methods to use?

What is your system for monitoring formal and informal student learning?

What do you see as your primary role as a teacher? Secondary role (Ts-Ts; Ts-Ps)

What circumstances can teachers control to help students to reach their fullest potential?

To be a “professional” has many different meanings to people. What do you believe are the qualities of a professional?

Think of the educators you’ve known and truly admired. What outstanding qualities did they possess?

What do you see as the best types of ongoing professional development in the lives of educators?
Can you think of any poor professional development that you’ve recently been through?

What recommendations do you have for helping educators reflect more deeply on their goals and methods for instruction?

What resources do you look toward to help you improve your practice (research, peer discussion, grad school courses)?

In what ways have you known teachers to attempt to validate / recognize themselves as an accomplished educator?

In what ways have you personally sought to validate / recognize yourself as an accomplished educator?

How do you feel that excellent educators should be recognized (informal/ formal)?

Some people say that there can be a dark side to recognition. What do you think?

Tell me about one time that you felt really good about being recognized.

How do you feel that educators’ effectiveness should be monitored and evaluated?

What were your reasons for choosing/ choosing not to seek National Board Certification?

Why do you suppose that an increasing number of teachers are choosing to seek National Board Certification?

What impact do you think that National Board is having on our own educational system in the United States?

What concerns (if any) do you have regarding National Board’s ability to recognize accomplished teachers?

(If applicable) What changes occurred for you, as a teacher, as a result of going through the National Board Certification process?

How do you feel the public currently views the education profession?

How do you feel that you’re treated by students as a professional?

Do you feel that the people that you work with on a daily basis (administrators and teachers) value your role as a teaching professional? Examples?
How can we, as teachers, bring increased respect to our profession?

Are there any other ideas that you would like to share that I might have forgotten to ask?
APPENDIX C

Sample Individual Interview Transcript
JU: Describe your teaching background and current professional assignment.

MI: I'm currently in high school. I teach geometry and an integrated math class—basically a mixture of kids who aren't ready for Algebra, and a senior math class which has the same kids that are in the integrated class just four years later. I spent 4 years in middle school—did my time in Purgatory, the hormonal years. In high school, I've taught most high school classes but I've never taught Algebra II. I prefer calculus and geometry to the rest, but you teach whatever you get.

I had 12 years of school and I was a TA before that. I studied philosophy.

JU: Tell me about the feel of the school environment in which you teach. What are you satisfied with? What would you like to see change?

MI: This is my 1st year at this high school. The administration is infinitely better. When they say something, they MEAN it as opposed to (name of past school district) where they said that they meant it maybe they meant it and maybe they didn't. "If you do something you'll be suspended. 50 people did so we can't suspend 50 people!" We have so much bomb scares this year. They said "If you bring your book bags to school, you can't come in." We sent 300 people home that first day. That's the way it's supposed to be! When you don't mean it, you don't say it. (Name of past school district) doesn't get that. So I'm real happy with that.

I've never felt in danger. I never really felt unsafe in (name of past school district). It's just nice to know that you'll be backed up and they're going to follow through.

JU: How do you feel about the type of interaction and support among teachers and administrators within your building? What are you satisfied with? What would you like to see change?

MI: It's good. Everyone's real supportive. They've been welcoming to new staff—we got a bunch of new people this year.

Interaction with administration is good. I like them— they seem to be reasonable human beings.
Always, one of the big things is there needs to be more time. I really think that there ought to be a space each day for common planning time. In the math time, to get us all together, we’ve got one or two staff meetings a month. If you want to have a department meeting—by the time you’re done with all this there’s so much after-school time that people are reluctant to keep committing. I tell people “I don’t mind doing this— but I’ve got kids to pick up, I’ve got this and that to do.”

As a teacher, what the general world doesn’t understand is that I can only call people for 40 minutes twice a day. If you get on hold one of those times, that’s it! So the only time you only have to talk to people before school’s out. To make appointments, you don’t have time to sit on the phone and go through somebody’s 8-layer voicemail to talk to the phone company or something. So it’s hard to keep giving up after-school time and I really wish. They’ll never afford it and never be able to work it out unless they were willing to somehow come across with more money to give us a spot in the day where those departments can get together. We do it but only about once a month. It’s not enough. It’s not enough to articulate everything that different people do. There’s smaller interactions. We try to get together as a course— still everything isn’t as well coordinated and isn’t as well thought out as it could be if you had the TIME built into the day or the year to sit down as a department.

And you know what happens the first couple days of school. You have professional days. You’ve got to set up your room, run syllabuses. You’re left with a day to get your room ready, get yourself ready, and prepare yourself to teach the courses. That isn’t enough time to do some of this planning. I don’t know what they do over the summer time.

JU: What committees have you served on/ leadership roles served throughout your years of teaching? What have you enjoyed or not enjoyed?

MI: Here, nothing cause this is my first year in the building and I’m pressed with that. In my old position, I was Department Chair for 5 out of the 8 years I was there. I served on the committee that put together the building staff development for 2 sessions a year. We were a Venture Capitol School and I was on the steering committee for that. So there’s a lot in the building. Also I served on a committee for the Board Regents— Ohio Board of Education to put together the outcomes for the 12th grade math test. And NOW, next Saturday, the board for the local OSU/CEA state grant for National Board Candidates. But next weekend I go to Philadelphia as part of the committee to structure the recertification. I think we’ve been giving out certificates for 6 years. That means that we only have 4 years to go. People are beginning to think “What is it that I have to do? Is this something that I have to start to prepare for?” So I’m on that committee to start looking at that. Just yesterday, I was nominated for People to People Ambassadorships but it seems that it’s an Eisenhower Grant funded organization that sends educational missions to different countries for exchange of ideas. I’m going to send in my resume. It would just be a 2 week travel. The math people
go to China. But I’ve got 2 little kids. It’s not that I would die to miss them for 2 weeks. But I’m going to China, I want THEM to go to China! If I get the offer, I’ll go. It’s too good to pass up.

JU: In the future, where do you see yourself in education?

MI: Teaching. I don’t see changing any. I certainly in (name of past school district) could have moved into the PAR program. But I’m not ready to give up the group of kids. I need my kids. In this situation, I’m not established yet so I’m at a little bit of a loss. I really don’t have a group of kids. Every situation, particularly as they get older, there’s places where they feel most at home. In a math classroom, or a music classroom, or a science, or whatever it is that their particular interest is. I had those kids. They mostly were calculus or advanced kids that became my kids. God forbid something should happen at school and they have to go somewhere, they would have come to me. I don’t have any of my kids yet. I sort of miss that. I don’t question that all the time, I do have kids that I get along fine with. I don’t see giving up kids yet. I really don’t have a good sense of when. Long range I’m interested in teacher ed. Given my background and what it would take to get a PhD- I would go into philosophy of ed. My masters work and graduate work was in philosophy and it wouldn’t- my masters would transfer over. I hate to think of requalifying and writing. I’m ABD and that should count for something.

JU: If I were to observe in your classroom for an entire day, what teaching methods would I see you utilizing?

MI: I’m fairly old-fashioned. I’m in front, I have the pen. They do talk about it. But it is fairly traditional. One of the reasons I became a math teacher in particular from philosophy is I knew I could get an abstract subject matter across in a way that students would understand. While cooperative learning and some of these things are useful in other subjects, in math I’m very straightforward. I do use a lot of technology. We use calculators all the time. Some of the newer ones are really math computers. We do do group work, but it’s very impromptu. “I want you to work on this. Yeah, you can work together.” I’m not that much structured in group work. I don’t have kids conducting material that often. By and large, I never force anyone to the board. I hated to go to the board when I was a student. So why should I make them do that? Also I find that I love to write on the board. It’s my class, I get to do what I want. I’m fairly straightforward. There’s a sense- I’m a very academic teacher. I am preparing kids to go on. If they’re going to go to college, they’re going to have to learn how to sit and take notes, listen to a lecture, and learn that way. They can’t just approach that for the first time when they get to college. It’s going to hurt them. I don’t feel it’s my purpose in life because that’s just the way I teach. But I don’t feel that I have to change. I’m successful and kids seem to learn the way I do things anyway. I’m
not saying that it’s best for everyone or that it’s the only way to teach. But it works!

JU: How did you come to believe that those teaching methods are the right methods to use?

MI: I came out of philosophy. I spent 9 years in philosophy. So one of the things that I left with was a very strong opinion that I knew as well as anybody else that I had a conceptual background and a chain of reasoning that I can back up whatever I feel. Given that, and given all the great philosophical arguments of why you should teach, I just developed math and developed the subject matter. I know what I want to teach and WHY I want to teach it.

I was never a very good high school student. I know what has worked and what I’m able to do. One of the things working with National Board and particularly with supporting candidates is it really doesn’t make a difference what you do, but why you do it. There’s an easy justification for that.

JU: What is your system for monitoring formal and informal student learning?

MI: Primarily it’s their response in the classroom. What they’re doing, what they’re writing, what type of questions they’re asking, what type of eye contact, how are they interacting with the kids around them, interest level. By the middle of October, given tests are really academic, I 90 percent of the time I can predict a person’s score within 5 points. I understand kids change, kids learn, but most of the time I know whose going to get what grade and where they’re going to have their mistakes before we actually take a test or quiz. I collect homework all the time. They have to practice, we have to value it. We take a quiz over smaller parts of the material then take a test. By the time were into taking a test, I know how people are going to do. I’m surprised more times by someone doing poorly than someone doing well. But then they’re high school kids. If the person they’re infatuated with looked at them wrong before they walk in the classroom, it’s over. Do you read the comics in the paper. There’s a cartoon “ZITS.” It has high school boys down flat. There’s one where he’s in class with his girlfriend. His girlfriend is much more mature and knows he exists. She stretches and yawn and his head is bouncing all around. She says “Oh that felt good.” He says “Good for me too!” If you see something like that happen, then forget this boy’s mind for the rest of the class! Forget it, there’s nothing we can do with him anymore. He’s a hormone. He’s lost for 40 minutes out of the hour!

One of the things that amazes me. I hear all the time, “Why are girls turned off from math?” I don’t know where they get this. In Northland in the calculus there was always more girls than boys. And you’re in advanced classes, it’s about 50/50. I just don’t see it. I don’t understand. Part of the thing is is that you pick kids for the advanced track in 7th grade. Who’s more mature in 7th grade? Girls.
Well, there’s going to be a higher representation of girls. I just don’t see it happening the way you and I do. I believe them, but I just personally don’t see it.

JU: What do you see as your primary role as a teacher? Secondary role (Ts-Ts; Ts-Ps)

MI: Developing minds.

JU: What do you see as your primary role interacting with other teachers?

MI: Developing minds. Aristotle had an argument. "What makes a chair good?" You sit on it, it doesn’t break. There’s a whole set of properties that make a chair a chair. Anything you sit on could be a chair, but a good chair has certain properties. So he had an argument. "What’s the function of different things?" Then we get to people, "What’s the function of people? What makes a person a person? What makes a person unique? What does a person do that nothing else does?" The ability to think! Emotive of course, philosophically it has always been less important- part of the problem is that it’s a male dominated field. The theory of Western thought is rationale thought. So to be the best possible person, you be as rationale and use your rationale abilities as much as possible. It’s reasonable. Reasonable argument. So what would be the best way to use your rationale facilities? It would be to develop those abilities in others. To work to make everyone else realize as much of their rationale ability as possible. So in one sense there’s a drive for me personally to be a teacher because as a philosopher it is what’s most important about people and most important way that you can value someone else as a person is to help to develop them.

Back to something I said I believe that the way I look at math, and the skills I think are important, and the way that I conduct it- I think I’m right. I’m sure that I’m wrong sometimes and I accept that. But I don’t really believe it, I don’t really believe that I’m wrong. So when we’re having a discussion about what type of skills and how much we should use calculators and how much we shouldn’t and these type of issues, then it’s part and part my belief that I have to convince people to see what’s right. You don’t just do that in a faculty meeting, you do that in the hallways in between classes talking about what topics are next and how you’re going to teach them and how you’re incorporating technology and all these things is a constant effect to change. In the sense that if you can change the way a teacher changes, then you’ve changed the way 150 kids learned this year, and 150 next year.

JU: What do you see as your primary role interacting with other parents?

MI: Keeping them informed, knowing what’s going on. Kids still need their parents but they need them differently by the time they’re in high school. One of the big things about middle and high school is the separation from your parents, trying to
become more of an individual. One mistake is that parents assume too much that their kids are developing the way they want them to and aren’t as on top of things. Part of my role is to have to keep them informed about what’s going on with their kid in class so that they know where it is and what’s going on and what needs to be addressed. One of the reasons I moved from to is now I’m in a school where my kids will go. I’m not going to follow them along down the hall with my hand on his shoulder talking to them and give him a kiss before he goes to class however much I may want to- but he’s not going to be able to get away with doing too many things wrong in a day and a week before I’ll know about it. I think you have to stay on top of the kids.

JU: What do you see as your primary role interacting with administration?

MI: Giving them some understanding that two to three percent of the bottom-half should be moved away so the larger group in the middle doesn’t think “Well they don’t have to do anything, why should I?” They do a much better job of that in (name of school current district). You should be suspending and expelling kids in September for behavior problems. I really believe that you need to make examples of kids and early. First or second grade- the first time kids will say “I’m not going to.” You have to say “Either you are or you’re not going to be here.” Then the kids that are saying I’ll try it, then suddenly, whoop they’re not here anymore. Well, you don’t do what you’re supposed to, you’re not going to be there. I don’t say “Throw them out on the streets.” But there should be alternative learning situations with a much smaller class size where a lot of those kids can get the more personal attention they’re clearly demanding. Again, I’ve got classes that are a real problem cause I’ve got 2 or 3 kids that are constantly sucking so much attention and so other kids say “I don’t have to do this…” You lose a lot of your group of kids. That’s where I think administration can have the biggest impact.

I also think the administration needs to teach every two or three years. I don’t think anyone should be an administrator that has been in administration for 10 or 15 years. They don’t know what’s going on in the classroom any longer. They just do not. And at high school and middle school, any time when we’re changing teachers, I think that they ought to teach in that subject area at the end of the day. One class every year. Just so that they have that sense of relationship with kids that they’re still IN the classroom and they can’t be escaping to administration to avoid teaching.

JU: What circumstances can teachers control to help students to reach their fullest potential?

MI: Classroom environment, how you treat the kids, establishing relationship, establishing what’s going on in the classroom. That’s the most important thing.
JU: To be a "professional" has many different meanings to people. What do you believe are the qualities of a professional?

MI: For one thing, you do what you're supposed to do without having to be told what you're supposed to do. They acknowledge that there's certain duties, and certain responsibilities and certain unpleasant tasks that come with being a teacher. You do it because you're supposed to do it. You do your best regardless of the fact that you're tired and you'd rather do something else and even though no one's going to say to you "Hey, you're supposed to be doing this." You do it because you're supposed to. Fortunately, it's one of the things that I think made National Board easier for me- but you have to be reflective of what you're teaching. Again it comes from my philosophy background. But you don't do the same lesson because it worked last year and you did it last year because it worked the year before. OK, the kids are learning, the kids are doing well, they're meeting their expectations, but you don't do it just because it works. If it works and it's good, then you do it for the same reasons you did it the first time- because it meets certain goals. You're reexamining. You don't do anything by rote. You're not mailing in your classes.

JU: Think of the educators you've known and truly admired. What outstanding qualities did they possess?

MI: They were uncompromising. They told the kids what they expected and that was the end of that. You had no choice. Sure some people didn't meet the expectations, but their expectations were the same for everybody and everyone had to meet them. This is just the way things were. They stood up for what they believed in. They let the administration know "You can't do that. That's not what's right for kids." They taught kids that would say, "You're too tough but I'd rather be here than in across the hall."

JU: What do you see as the best types of ongoing professional development in the lives of educators?

MI: National Board. Most people don't reflect at the level that National Board makes you think about things. If there's one prejudice that National Board has it's that it's for reflective teachers. There's a class of teacher that's called The Natural Teacher, that knows what to do in the classroom. It's like they just know what to do. They know how a lesson's not going right. There's a whole class of teachers that are just natural, you know how to approach it, you know how to bring in a new topic. It just happens! They aren't thinking about things- it's natural. When they sit down to do National Board and they're forced suddenly to articulate this, there's a real problem. I know a teacher that didn't pass, and I have no way of understanding how they didn't pass. It just boggles my mind that someone that good couldn't get it. I was talking to them and clearly what happened is they are not a reflective practitioner. Again, it's natural, it's nothing
that they’ve ever vocalized. It all works, kids learn, kids like them, kids want to come to their class, they teach. So without that prejudice against those type of people. Sure maybe they can learn how to do this, and some of them do, but some of them just can’t. That type of reflection is very important. I don’t know if there’s any kind of staff development that makes you reflect and look at what you’re doing, why you’re doing it. We’re looking at what do you do for these children in this situation, in this classroom, these classmates, with this material, today. Not what do you do for everyone all the time or for 10 days or 2 weeks. What do you do with them now. That type makes you think and reflect on what’s going on and what it means for tomorrow and the day after and yesterday.

JU: Can you think of any poor professional development that you’ve recently been through?

MI: Sure. Someone else standing up in front telling me about something that they did “if you’d only take the courses and the directions they took” how much better it would be. People just tell you about how wonderful cooperative learning is but never give you any way to do it in your classroom. Give you an example with a high school teacher. Give you 6 examples of how wonderful it works in 4th grade language arts. That’s always a frustration. The type of things where someone comes to you and says “This is a great new way to teach.” You go and it doesn’t give you the tools to do it right now. You’ve got to lay the groundwork- here’s the by in and then we’ll go on if you’re interested. That’s possible.

JU: What recommendations do you have for helping educators reflect more deeply on their goals and methods for instruction?

MI: It’s difficult. As a facilitator they’ve already made a commitment to it and you can talk to them by giving them the standards. You can talk about it and try to ask them “why” and make them articulate it. Some people, some of these Natural Teachers, react in the way that you don’t go around over analyzing it, you use the beauty of it. It would be like trying to define love. If you dissect it, it’s not in any of the pieces. I think you can dissect teaching because I’m not a natural. But those people that are upset to dissect it and think they lose what’s essentially good about it. It’s a hard move.

JU: What resources do you look toward to help you improve your practice (research, peer discussion, grad school courses)?

MI: The professional journals, looking at different ideas, watching other people in my building teach. I know where my weak spots are and you try to get around it. How am I going to make better use of this? It’s continual self-reflection. I have enough of a subject matter knowledge base. I have enough teacher ed and I continue to do technology but other staff development in context. I have to get better at some of the things so I’m not a roadblock. I really don’t believe there’s 295
going to be a teaching method that’s going to come out of the blue somehow that’s no one’s ever thought of that I’ll say “whooo!” Part of it is the people I know. I like the way I teach, I’m successful at it. I don’t feel a real need to do any basic change. I know I could be better. That’s what I tell the candidates. “If you really think that you’re perfect, you need to get out of teaching.” Kids don’t need that. No one is perfect! You may be very very good, but if you’re really that good you believe you can be better.

JU: In what ways have you known teachers to attempt to validate / recognize themselves as an accomplished educator?

MI: A lot of times people will do it by “How well do their students do?” In high school setting, there’s a set of teachers who teach Advanced Placement classes. At then end of the year you come back and 70 percent of your kids passed the test and you say “I must be doing a good job!” Something that young teachers have a severe problem with is that when you’re giving a test you’re not testing yourself. You’re testing how well do the students learn? Even in the AP setting you’re not testing you, how well do students learn? You’re the one that’s designing the test. I can make a test today that everyone would pass. I can make one that everyone would fail. You have to look for the fit. A primary way that people do it is that connection with the kids’ overt learning. Also, there are certain honors that come along with the school of the National Honor Society would induct a teacher every year. That’s something that the PTA’s in most buildings have a Teacher of the Year.

JU: In what ways have you personally sought to validate / recognize yourself as an accomplished educator?

MI: I did National Board. When I heard about it and started to learn about it. It was one of those things where I said, “OK, I think I’m a good teacher. Let’s find out!” Not that I would have thought that I wasn’t a good teacher if I didn’t pass. It was one of those things that I said “This is a national standard completely independent from my situation, from my school, from my kids. Do I meet these standards?” And of course I was in the first group in math so no one else had had it. Very interesting in math.

JU: How do you feel that excellent educators should be recognized (informal/formal)?

MI: Unfortunately, and this is just the nature of the business, our prime client is kids. The best way is when a kid turns around at the end of the year, at the end of a week, or two years later comes back and says “The difference you made in my life was incalculable. I am a different person because you were my teacher.” That’s the best way but we’re working with kids. They just don’t do that! When they’re 40 they say “This teacher, they’re the one that did it.” And then you’re
dead! (laughter). You’ve moved on. Who knows where you are. And even if they’re in California and you’re in Ohio they’re not coming back just to say “thanks” because they had an epiphany one day at work. They’re not going to go and do that.

It would be nice, unfortunately, it’s part of the way our country values people, is monetary. It would be nice to have a salary step for National Board or some other type of recognition. Maybe peer recognition or the administration can nominate people for it. There should be some type of an additional way because one of the things that encourages and enables people to be unprofessional as a teacher is you don’t get anything more by being professional. There’s no advantage to working hard and doing a good job when the person next door is handing out dittos and watching TV in the afternoon! Why should I bang my head against the wall for the same money? Or less because they’ve been teaching for five years longer than I have! Some type of merit pay.

Another way would be to nationally give doctors and lawyers a set salary scale so we would take away the monetary prestige from being a doctor and a lawyer. I think you would still have sufficient doctors— I don’t think you’d have sufficient lawyers. But I think you could do just fine with that! Right now, by and large, above it all those people aren’t teachers because they want their summers off. You’re dealing with teachers who want to be a teacher. There’s not enough money in it, there’s not enough joy in it to do it just because you get summers off. You have to want to do it. Unfortunately, our country values money more than the profession. So money would help. I think that in a country like Germany and Japan where teachers are held in much more esteem, I think that there’s room. It would seem to me there’d be less need for searching for ways of validation because the teachers would get more direct validation from parents and community.

JU: Some people say that there can be a dark side to recognition. Some people become jealous of those being recognized. What do you think?

MI: Just deal with it. I’m sorry. Just because you can’t deal with anybody else being recognized. I know it’s a blanket statement, but they’re the teachers that we’re having problems with. They’re the teachers that aren’t being professional, that aren’t’ doing what they’re supposed to do. You don’t see athletes say “Oh, I’m getting jealous of that John Elway, he’s won two Super Bowls. I just wish he would just shut up and be a mediocre passer.” I know what happens. “Why do we have to applaud (his name)? He’s not that great of a teacher. I’m as good as he is!” Well, fine, I don’t think I’m the best teacher in the world. I know I’m not the best teacher in my building. But by recognizing people, we raise the level of professional. You raise the level of recognition. We say that hey there are teachers that are above the norm. We all had some, we know they’re out there.
Why shouldn’t we recognize them? Why shouldn’t we be able to say “Hey, this person is an accomplished teacher!”

JU: Tell me about one time when you personally felt good about being recognized.

MI: The best time was the National Honor Society. I had never made National Honor Society as a student- I was not a good high school student. I graduated like 700 out of 1100 in my class. Somewhere along the line I got the idea that it was of little importance. Except for reading and writing and arithmetic- if it was really important, they’d teach it to me in college…. I was recognized as a teacher about 6 years ago. It was the most personal award because it was my kids in the school who were willing to say “He’s tough, he’s professional.” Kids nominated me, kids voted on me. It was the good kids saying “OK, he’s a hassle, he makes us do all this work. But we agree that it’s for our best.” I really liked that. I had a class the year before that I expected to be nominated by and it didn’t happen. The next year I wasn’t really expecting it so that was nice.

JU: How do you feel that educators’ effectiveness should be monitored and evaluated to determine if teachers are accomplished?

MI: I think the National Board process is fine. You’re taking account of yourself in the classroom and then at the end in the assessment center with your knowledge base. It’s not abstract- it’s what’s going on in your classroom. I think watching teachers- are your evaluations effective enough? You have to do more sets of classroom observations than are done. You have to be in the classroom for a few sets of lessons or for a longer period. And come back to the same class and go through the difficult times of days and weeks and months and year. Anyone can teach the 1st day of school. How do you teach the day before Christmas Break? Try after Spring Break with Seniors! All they want now is a diploma.

JU: What were your reasons for choosing/ choosing not to seek National Board Certification?

MI: I wanted to know if I measured up. I’m ABD not by my own choice. I was given a consolation Masters by North Carolina. I had to take the first 2 chapters of my dissertation and submit it as my Master’s Degree. We had a parting of the ways-politics. Knowing what I know now, I would have fought differently. I was nowhere near as confident in myself as I am now. I wasn’t the best writer and in philosophy that’s important. I think I’m at least an average writer but not for philosophy. That was part of the reason.

At that point, when you’re told you can’t be what you’re really interested in becoming, you doubt yourself. One of the things I found out through being a TA is I did enjoy teaching. So I started to teach and I taught in the Middle School. You think you get NO recognition other places! Particularly as an 8th grade
teacher— you get absolutely NO recognition. The 7th grade teacher see their kids the next year and the kids are back “Oh I love you!” No one ever goes back to the middle school. Maybe if you’ve graduated they’ll come back to high school to say. In 8th grade, it was nothing. I was put down hard. Now I’m a high school teacher which I was always fated to be.

You have kids say you’re a good teacher, you have kids get good results, you have kids learn, go on and do other things. Some kids anybody could teach. Someone could stand up, hold the book up and say “see?” And they would learn. How do you know how good a teacher you are? Well, when I first became aware of NB it was one of those things when I said “OK, I have a need to be validated. I have a need to measure myself.” Really leftover from not being able to complete the dissertation. So when that opportunity presented itself, especially since the state was going to pay for the opportunity, I don’t know if I would have put $2000 dollars down to measure myself this way. I don’t know that I wouldn’t. But the state paying made it a much easier decision. And the fact that they would pay afterwards if I made it. I need to know from someone else to say “Yeah, you are a good teacher!” So that’s where it came from.

JU: Why do you suppose that an increasing number of teachers are choosing to seek National Board Certification?

MI: It’s slowly building a critical mass so that it is recognized. We have an accomplishment. To be validated in this way. There will always be teachers who say “I believe that I’m a good teacher but I don’t have time, I don’t need someone else telling me that I’m a good teacher.” I see it in my kids! I did that, I believed that I was. But I needed the validation for other reasons. I think that as more and more people become NB Certified the perception of the community will start to be that the better teachers are Board Certified. Then people will say that I want that on my name because I feel that I belong in that group. The opportunities are already opening for teachers for certification and more of the positions. Teacher in Residence for the State, the Governor’s special teacher, is a Board Certified teacher. I’m a local male math teacher. There’s not a whole lot of us. So I get a lot of calls from the State to do this and do that.

JU: What impact do you think that NB is having on our educational system in America?

MI: It’s hard to say. I believe that it will transform. Because of the nice fit between National Board and Pathwise, and the Praxis exam. NCATE is coming on board, and the professional organizations are coming on board. I think in one sense NB is the backbone of the transformation.

The five core propositions of NB— the teachers know students and know how to teach them, teachers monitor their students, know their subjects, are reflective.
practitioners and I think the other one is community focused. I’m much more student and building focused than I am community focused—so I think that’s why I forget that one. Those five core propositions drive it all! I think they’re how the NB connects with Pathwise, they’re how all the NB certificates are connected. Each certification area has a 20-30 page booklet of standards. They all revolve around the five. They are just these five propositions.

JU: What concerns (if any) do you have regarding National Board’s ability to evaluate accomplished teachers?

MI: I don’t know how they’re going to keep up with it. There’s already a shortage of assessors across the different disciplines. It’s only going to get worse.

I don’t think there’s a problem with the validity of the assessment. It’s an accurate assessment for those accomplished teachers who can express themselves. Again, looking back to the National Teacher issue, is that there are some people (inaudible) because of their inability to express themselves. I think the scoring system is fair. Again, part of that is heavily colored by the fact that they said I was accomplished. There is that problem!

JU: (If applicable) What changes occurred for you, as a teacher, as a result of going through the National Board Certification process?

MI: It added little things. I always knew I was a good teacher and believed it. But now, with the validation, I have a big enough ego as it is. I always believe that I’m right. Well, I say to the kids on the first day of school, National Board is under my name on the syllabus. I let them know what it is and I say “There are going to be times this year when you say does he know what he’s doing, is he crazy?” And as a matter of fact, yes I do. Furthermore a group of people who have no knowledge of who I am, who took a look at my work and what I do and said ‘yeah, he knows what he’s doing!’ And at Open Houses and things like that parents say “Oh that’s nice. We like that!” They don’t really understand. It sounds impressive and it is impressive.

There’s a little bit more money which is nice. I’m sure that committees and (inaudible) because of this. I’ve developed a relationship with the State Department and done things for them since I’m here in (name of past school district).

I always had student teachers or student observers in my classroom. But the idea of the reflection that it requires I was always doing. Writing is difficult for me. I don’t think that the process was easy for me. But a lot of people that I work with and that I know they had to think differently. They’d never asked themselves these questions. And I ask these questions all the time because I took in student teachers. A lot of times the student observers teaches for two weeks. Sometimes
I’ve had two classes back to back, and they’ve taken the 2nd class. So I teach something and then low and behold, they teach it exactly the same way. So you sit down and say “Why did you do it? I know why I did it. But why did you do it? What were you thinking thinking? Yes it worked, yes it was good. But you can’t do it just because it worked 40 minutes before. These questions had to be cast out every time. You had to process out what they did- all these questions came out. I was used to looking at someone else teach and seeing all the thousands of things that go on in a classroom. One of the things that videotaping does, and I highly recommend video taping all the time. I don’t do it because I hate myself on tape and I hate to listen to myself, but the things that you see. A 30 second interaction on the tape, you could go on pages on. What it told you, what happened, and where they’re going and something else.

So did it change me? No. It actually changed a little bit of the type of questions I ask. One of the things that my entries talked about what HOW do the students reason mathematically. That was always implicit. They answered this question so they must have been able to reason mathematically in these ways because they got the right answer. Some of the times now I’m asking “Why did you do what you did? How did you make that decision? Why are you thinking this way?” They have to make things more explicit- the thinking process.

JU: How do you feel the public currently views the education profession?

MI: I don’t know. I think that it differs. I’ve heard it said and I think it’s true everyone believes that the National education system is in serious trouble. We’re not keeping up. But yet their particular local schools are doing a good job. I think that part of the perception of us not doing a good job is because of the way we’re compared. The study that they just completed- the 3rd international mathematical study. They tested 3rd, 6th, 8th, and 12th graders on a variety of tasks. In the elementary grades we’re fine. But we lag behind 2/3rds of the developed nations in the high school. Well, we’re not testing equally. To get into high school in most of America you have to either pass 8th grade or you have to be too old to be in 8th grade. To get into high school in Japan, you have to qualify. In Germany, Australia, in the public schools in England, you have to pass. We’re testing everybody. Our classes are much more homogeneous than theirs are. So, yeah, there isn’t a comparison at all.

Furthermore, I could take a math book out from the 50s- we’re supposed to be the greatest nation in the world and we’d do that book in a third of the time. Our students are doing things that we never dreamed possible when we were in school. And we’re teaching much more to many more kids than there ever were before. Do we need to get better? Of course! So every kids achieving their full potential we still have room to improve. I think that people think that their corner is doing just fine. I think that by and large people think that the teachers their kids have are good teachers, that they deserve respect, but in general teachers are not like
the ones that my kids have. They just want their summers off. They see them laying around all summer. Jealous and irritated.

JU: How do you feel that you’re treated by students as a professional?

MI: Unfortunately students are kids and what’s most important is interest in money. We just don’t stack up! It’d be nice. Again, with kids individual teachers they think are fine human beings, but by and large a lot of them that are going to be teachers don’t think it’s a very good idea and don’t think they want to be teachers by the time they get to high school. A lot of them become teachers and are happy and do a good job and change.

JU: Do you feel that the people that you work with on a daily basis (teachers) value one another?

MI: I don’t know. That’s a tough one. Again, I think this is part of the nature of the profession. So much of our time is taken up with the problem kids and with the problems of education so we don’t have the time or the energy to tell people that they did a good job and that so and so learned and what not. I think that happens best when teachers’ kids get into other teachers’ classrooms. That’s when I think that teachers get more validation from each other- not just out of the blue.

JU: What about administrators? Do you think they value you?

MI: Yeah, but again when you become an administrator you cross a line. Your goals are so different. As an administrator, with a substitute in the room, if no one comes to the office, you’re happy. As a teacher, you want all these things to happen. I think that their focus changes, by and large; not 100 percent from education to management. You want a well-ordered quietly run school where you never show up on the news and everyone goes home safely more than everyone learns a lot.

JU: How can we, as teachers, bring increased respect to our profession?

MI: I think things like National Board are the way we need to go. To somehow bring a level of professionalism, a level of objectivity to saying that there are good teachers in this building, we have good teachers in our district, state, and nation. This is a way to bring that about. Pushing our governors and legislators to mention it all they can. Recognize good teaching!

END TRANSCRIPT
APPENDIX D

Sample Guide for Focus Group Interview
Focus Group Interview Guide

Methodology
Welcome
Introductions / Inform of audio recording
Review purpose of the study and assure confidentiality
Share guidelines for discussion

Questions

1. If you were asked to identify the most important professional skills possessed by accomplished teachers, what would they be? Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. We’re looking for discussion.
   a. Write answer on the form provided
   b. Prioritize lists with “one” being the most important skill
   c. Participants identify top three priorities and write each on a note card / post on wall behind each participant for discussion

2. We’re going to go around the room and ask each of you to explain how you came to your decisions. If anyone has questions or does not agree, that’s what a group like this is for. Remember, we are not necessarily looking to agree. We want to hear each person’s perspective. There are no right or wrong answers.

3. I’m going to show you a list of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standard’s core propositions for accomplished teaching. (Share brief background behind NBPTS on overhead). The NBPTS claims to identify “accomplished practitioners” by assessing teachers according to these 5 core propositions. How do you personally feel about the appropriateness of this measurement? Are additions or deletions needed?

4. The NBPTS has been praised by some for establishing a system to recognize and reward accomplished educators. What do you see as the potential benefits in this system of certification?

5. The NBPTS has been criticized by some for being elitist ($2000 application fee, low number of minority applicants, slanted toward particular style of teaching, competitive). What do you see as the potential drawbacks of certification?

6. What do you suppose are the main motivational factors causing educators to seek National Board Certification?

7. Do you think that many teachers are hungry for the type of public recognition that National Board Certification provides? Why?
8. What alternative forms of professional validation do you feel are currently available to teachers (graduate coursework, research, mentors)?

9. How do you feel the public currently views the education profession?

10. How can we, as teachers, bring increased respect to our profession?
APPENDIX E

Sample Focus Group Interview Transcript
Focus Group 3  
National Board Certified Teachers (Alicia, Catrine, Leah, Lydia, & Mitch)  
Interview: 2/26/00 at researcher’s school building 10-12PM

Introduction/ Ice Breakers

JU: If you were asked to identify the most important professional skills possessed by accomplished teachers, what would they be? Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. We’re looking for discussion.

[Participants write answers on the cards provided, rank cards from most important to least important, and post cards on wall for discussion]

JU: We’re going to go around the room and ask each of you to explain how you came to your decisions. If anyone has questions or does not agree, that’s what a group like this is for. Remember, we are not necessarily looking to agree. We want to hear each person’s perspective. There are no right or wrong answers.

LE: [INDEX CARDS]
1. Reflective
2. Organized
3. Knowledge of curriculum
4. Child-Focused / Centered
5. Flexibility

Organized because you have a certain amount of time to complete expectations. If you’re not organized, you’re not going to do those. The curriculum, especially for your grade level, so you know what connections to make at what time when the children are ready for those. That brings me to child-focused and child-centered. Understanding the developmental milestones and so-forth for the children that you’re working with so that you can better plan and organize your lessons. And flexible, because there’s so many changes that you’re not prepared for. If you’re not flexible then you’re going to get up-tight.

CA: [INDEX CARDS]
1. Needs of all students are important
2. ALL children can learn
3. Knowledge of child development
4. Subject matter knowledge
5. Willingness to go beyond call of duty
I guess I consider it important to be concerned about students’ needs and about the whole child. Not just a subject. If they come to school hungry, they’re not necessarily going to be able to learn. Lots of things are going on in families. I have a little girl right now whose mother walked out on them. I have to be concerned about that before I can teach her. So I have to give her hugs and stuff all day long. And when I say all children can learn, I really believe that.

And they don’t all learn at the same speed or in the same way or as much. And they peek at different times during the school year. I have parents who come in and say, “Oh, I was told they weren’t ready to come to kindergarten and I was scared to death!” I say, “Oh, give them a chance.” Sometimes in the 2nd semester the little light comes on. Of course, we have to know how children grow and develop. That’s related to learning and their needs and all other kinds of things. But how can I teach them if I don’t even understand about child development?

I think knowledge about curriculum too. Being a generalist as we are, we have to know everything- social studies, science, health, I have to know it all.

Willingness to go beyond the call of duty. I wanted to commitment, but you already had commitment up there. That means that we all work like dogs but we don’t mind it.

AL: [INDEX CARDS]
1. Reflective
2. Understanding of children and their stage of development
3. Effective management
4. Set high standards for themselves and students they teach
5. Deep understanding of the subject matter that is being taught

AL: A lot of mine have already been talked about, but I’ll give my own analogies. I wrote reflective. I think that you should think about your teaching on a day-to-day basis so that you can find ways to get better and solve problems.

Also, understanding of children in their stage of development. You need to know what your kids are able to do to be able to bring them forward so that you understand where they’re at in their development.

Effective management of a classroom. It goes along with being organized, like LE said, because if kids are going to be able to learn, they have to feel like they’re safe.

Setting high standards for themselves, the students they teach. I think being a life-long learner and showing kids that you’re continually learning and you’re pushing yourself. Some feel more willing to push themselves.
LY: [INDEX CARDS]

1. High expectations for self and students
2. Reflective
3. Content knowledge
4. Current with trends and research
5. Risk taker

I put high expectations for self and students and that kind of encompasses also meeting the individual needs of students to help them meet those expectations.

Also, I think that you have to be also always pushing for that next level up even though you get caught in the daily grind- there’s always another level that you could go to.

Reflective. I put that and I notice everybody did. But we work with a teacher, God bless him, but he says, “I know it all. I don’t need anymore.” I’m serious, I’ve heard him say twice,” I know everything. I don’t need any further information. I don’t need it.” I just think if he could add that quality of reflection to his teaching, with the content knowledge that he has, that he could really...

That also could be hiding behind something. I don’t want to pick on him. You’d have to see it in context. I just thought that the reflective quality would really be a nice addition to that.

Content knowledge. I know my favorite areas are math and science. Math is another thing that truly if you do not have. Teachers are usually very good in reading, but if you don’t develop those other areas what happens is kids get farther and farther behind and you see it in 4th grade proficiency scores. They all do fairly well in reading and writing, but every other one by the time science drops off in our school district to 20 percent and that’s just abominable and that drives me nuts.

Current with trends and research. This is one I’m pushing myself on this year. I really went away from that but I find as I come back and read the journals and everything, that it’s really making me think about what I’m doing in my classroom. And whether or not I’m just sticking with status quo and whether or not I’m trying new things.

That kind of goes with risk taker. I am a big risk-taker but I don’t think you have to be a big risk-taker, but you have to be willing to try new things — let them fail, and them retry them again and see what happens. I fail very often, but by the end I usually end up with something really good.

JU: Have you felt like you struggle with feeling like you know a lot. Then you tell yourself, “No, I don’t.”
GP3: No.

LY: By the time I was teaching in my first career, I was old enough to know to be very humble. I've always gone into it with that attitude.

MI: [INDEX CARDS]

1. Knowledge of students
2. Knowledge of content
3. Reflective about their practice
4. Willingness to take risks
5. Willingness to give themselves fully to kids

Knowledge of students I think is most important. Because if you don’t know who you’re teaching, you might as well go home. And I mean that both individually and as a group. One of the things that we’re doing right now. I work with [state department of education personnel’s] husband, [name of husband], and he started a reading group at the school and we’re reading a book on adolescents “A Tribe Apart.” Some of the images that this writer can come up with is actually very scary.

In high school, knowledge of content is almost as important because too often you have people out there that don’t know what they’re talking about. It’s very hard to stay current and stay ahead. And not just know what you’re teaching, but you have to know more than what you’re teaching so that it can fit together.

Being reflective about their practice. Knowing just because it worked last year doesn’t mean it’s going to work this year. (CA: or yesterday!) It can work on one group and then die the next.

Willingness to take risks like LY said. You have to be willing to try new things. I know that there’s times I go to technology or some type of workshop. I do in the next year and say, “OK, this is what we’re going to do!” And it dies in 6 months. But you keep trying eventually you will find where it’s useful and where it’s not, when it’s distracting and where it’s positive.

Going back to beyond the call of duty. You’ve got to be fully there all the time. You’ve got to be completely giving to the kids. You’ve got to say, “This is where I am, this is what I do. I’m not playing. I’m not kidding. 100 percent of the time I’m here 100 percent for you.” It’s been more clear now this year because I’m teaching where I live. I’ve got kids around the block, kids across the street. My whole life is right there. They know, more so, if I’m kidding. I run into them all the time now. I like it a lot more. I moved for two reasons. Because my kids will
go to this school someday. And I wanted to teach where I live and I wanted that connection. And so you’re there all the time.

Somewhere we feel that way about modeling learning. One of the things that National Board did was the kids knew you were doing it. The kids know that I’ve changed a few things. You’re modeling (inaudible). It’s not I’m going to hide what we’re doing so that when things don’t work right they don’t know it. But to keep everything right there in front of them.

JU: Where are our similarities? What pops out?

GP3: Reflection is on everybody’s, content knowledge is on everybody’s, kids (inaudible) is on everybody’s.

JU: Did you see anything that was distinctive or that you thought for yourself “Wow, I don’t know that I would have thought of that.”

GP3: In one way people said the same thing but expressed it differently.

JU: The one Alicia had setting high standards for themselves and the students to achieve. Is that when you discuss letting your students know that you were going for National Board?

AL: Yes. I think I was also thinking about accountability. To make sure the kids are going to achieve academically, they need to hold themselves accountable. I need to hold them accountable to high standards. In thinking about empowering my students and also showing them that I do that for myself.

JU: I noticed with Catrine, she was really coming from a childhood development, early childhood view of teaching. It’s almost like your philosophy is different.

LY: I think grade levels. I noticed she put the hugging thing. When they get to 3rd grade you don’t spend the time that you do in Kindergarten. Kids also begin to mask their problems. Where a Kindergartner will tell you. A 2nd and 3rd grader will hold it in and they will not express it.

MI: It comes back out later!

LY: It doesn’t come out as genuinely.

MI: We’re not allowed to hug!

JU: On management some people had it up there as a top priority.

MI: Organization.
LY: I liked organization too. You think about some people who come and they don’t have their lesson plans written. They just scrawl down after they did it for the day. I don’t see this as much at my school as I did at other places. The whole thing is just chaos the entire day. If you are not planned out -- when I plan 5 weeks ahead. I don’t always get there but I always know where I’m going eventually and where I want the kids to be. If you’re not organized, or you don’t have your kids ready -- you’re self-destructing and making it hard for yourself.

CA: I always stay away from that word “organized.” (laughs) [LY: You’re organized though] But in a different way. Organization always comes up when we’re training the assessor. “That’s what you should from teachers.” Don’t say that! I wouldn’t even be here. Organized in a different way. I think you can be organized to a fault. I’ve seen teachers who are so organized that they cannot be flexible. They can’t. If something goes wrong, they say, “We forgot to tell you there was an assembly today.” They freak out! It’s like “I can’t teach. My whole day is messed up.” I think I’m somewhere in the middle. I’m not completely disorganized but I never call myself an organized person.

JU: I wonder if it’s different working with little children.

LY: I think it’s more personality. Because when I think of organized, I don’t even think about those things. I just expect that there’s always monkey wrenches in the day.

CA: I would never go without lesson plans. I never have in the 32 years I’ve taught and I didn’t know anybody who ever did that (laughs). That’s the first time I’ve ever heard that in my life; to write your lesson plans at the end of the day.

MI: I know people that don’t write them period. They open the book and the next section is there.

CA: I’ve never heard of that!

MI: You’ve lead a sheltered life.

LY: I went to a Math-Their-Way workshop and that teacher took actually no records of her children’s work. I don’t know how she did it.

MI: In that defense, by this time, how many of your students are you surprised with when they take a test? [LY: all the time because I’m teaching different things] But by this time of year 90 percent of the time when a child takes a test I know what they’re going to get. [JU: You’re focusing on one subject area] That’s true.
JU: I have to pull out National Board here and show you how they decided to break down what a quality teacher is.

CA: We're all members of the learning community [MI: None of us had that one]

JU: How well could NB evaluate the "lovingness" you show towards a child?

LY: I think that when you look at "Teachers Consider the Children Individually," their priority is thinking about where each kid is coming from. Also, some people care a lot but they are not demonstrative.

MI: When you write, you have to show that you know your students. If you just have a service-knowledge that comes out in your writing. In student work, you can't clearly talk about particular student if you don't have a deep knowledge of them. Then in your videotape, you have to talk about the classroom, the atmosphere of the classroom.

LE: You had to explain specifically about the students that you were talking about. What their background was, what you thought the issues were.

CA: Also, I think you have to consider that you have taken the topic sentence of the 5 core propositions and it's an entire booklet. Then the standards all go back to the 5 core propositions. Then the standards are not just those little brief things, but there's a whole book that's the standards. But when you're looking at those you're not getting the whole picture because there's a lot of underlying message behind those topic sentences.

LY: When we went through, we had to do the "Portrait of the Child." And that's not in it anymore. I think they may have been trying to capture that. We went through the 1st year of early childhood and that was one and they dropped it. I don't know why -- if they couldn't make it even.

CA: I think that was one of the most difficult ones to assess and to understand where people were coming from. You followed one child's development. I think one reason it was there -- they wanted all the subject areas hit. That one kind of took in the physical education also. So Barb Kelley [NBPTS President] is very upset that that's gone since she's a Phys Ed teacher and chairman of NB.

LY: That might be another thing too. Maybe it wasn't written well enough too. A lot of people did not score well on that.

JU: Are you still all very comfortable with these standards?

GP3: Oh yeah. That encompasses it. I'd like to meet the people who did it. I
do think it’s a good baseline to build upon even if you’re not working toward NB. People get very threatened by that.

JU: I’d like for you to think about the most common reasons why you feel that some teachers choose to go for NB and others do not.

[Group works together to make poster. LY opts to work alone. She says, “I’d rather work by myself because I like to work with markers!” MI suggests use black marker for “No” side of poster. CA says “I object to that. I do!” MI changes it to gray.]

[LY’s Poster]
YES: -$2500 (this is not necessarily good)
- Self-challenge (stick person saying “I can do it!”)
- Peer pressure (State of North Carolina)
- Other perks- recognition, trip to White House, Opportunities

NO: - time
- insecurity
- feel that group is elitist (face saying “They’re a bunch of snobs”)
- don’t agree philosophically (“kids should sit in straight rows, go page by page in the book and not talk at all)

LY: Yes, $2500 is not necessarily good as we all know. [MI: Not necessarily good? Why is it not good?] Because a lot of people are putting the money as their first reason; not the professional value. I work with people who did that and they put the absolute minimum into it or they don’t really see the big picture. It’s good to get it, I’m not saying that. But if that’s the reason that you go for it, you can set yourself up for failure.

Self-challenge. Can I do it?

Peer pressure. I think about the State of North Carolina because they have so many teachers that passed and when you listen to them talk it’s almost like not being part of a sorority or a clique down there because so many teachers have it. [CA: That’s where the money comes on the other side too. They get the 12 percent so they’re all rushing in to DO it.] And a lot of them aren’t ready. They’re talking about giving three-year teachers there, which I don’t know what year you were. I did it my 5th and I thought it was pushing it.

Recognition. The trip to the White House — that’s all anybody talks about when it first started.

Other opportunities to go off in different directions which unfortunately takes a lot of people out of the classroom
I think *time* is the number one excuse people use, but I believe that insecurity is the number one reason that people don’t do it.

Then, of course, I have that thing about the elitist. I have actually heard sitting at a NB meeting [CA: Oh yeah, I AM the best teacher! MI: Whew! AL: A teacher I know says she’s heard that a lot too!] As in anything, you’ll find a broad range of feelings, but that’s kind of the feeling that I’ve heard other people say.

Then philosophically. There are people who don’t believe not in the 5 core propositions, but they don’t believe that children learn by working in groups. They believe that children learn by sitting down, opening the book, and going page by page. They’re very teacher-directed. If you don’t agree philosophically, it would be a waste of your time to go for it.

CA: They’re not biased as far as your teaching style. But she’s talking about a philosophy. There’s a whole different feel. Which is one of the things we have to tell the assessors. That was one of the first things on my bias hit list was chairs all in rows facing the front. We teach them to look for that underlying architecture where you go past that and that you can still be an accomplished teacher with your children sitting this way.

LY: I’m talking more about somebody who would open the book day one in math and just follow the book completely through and if the kid didn’t get it, tough, they go on. It’s more of that kind of a problem.

AL: I’ve heard about people down in the unions that they don’t feel that there should be something that makes teachers unequal.

CA: They keep saying that. North Carolina said that.

LY: It’s only when those politics come in. Because pure and theoretically it’s a really neat thing until the politics come in. Districts are using people for certain things, people are getting recognition, people are getting extra money. If none of that was there and all was equal, I don’t think anybody would care. But everything is coming behind it.

MI: But teachers *aren’t* all equal. But we’re not!

LY: In any business people aren’t equal.

MI: In most businesses, better people get paid more. [CA: reward!]

LY: Teaching is very socialistic. Everybody is supposed to get the same. We’re all supposed to be wonderful and it’s a touchy feely little environment.
JU: What does that do for our profession?

LY: Not much.

MI: That’s one reason why we’re doing this in a large sense to show that there *are* accomplished teachers out there. You’re never going to catch *all* accomplished teachers and that’s fine.

CA: And it’s never going to be a mandatory thing. It’s always going to be a voluntary system. So they have the choice. That’s how I feel when you get into that professional jealousy, “you had the same opportunity I did.” You may for some reason choose not to.

LY: And sometime in your life you can to. Because it’s on-going. And because it’s voluntary, I think that if the states stay out of it and it’s voluntary, we should be able to do what we want. We shouldn’t be mandated by our union what we should be able to do outside of our (inaudible).

The last one says “Students should sit in straight rows and not talk at all.”

CA: That’s not even the philosophy of our district but people are still doing it. Taking a textbook. That doesn’t have anything to do with NB. The district says don’t go page-by-page in this manual. This is your resource.

LY: Teachers are saying “Should I go page-by-page through this?”

CA: No!

JU: You know when you’re in the teacher’s manual they will give you a script. It’s insulting!

CA: Unbelievable!

MI: You have to remember long time teachers, where the district mandated that [CA: What about long-time teachers?] When I started teaching, the district had stickers to put into the math book that told me where I was supposed to be every single day of the year. Day 142, Day 143. [CA: We never had that at my level] They knew exactly what I was supposed to teach regardless of who was learning what - it didn’t make any difference.

JU: All right other group.

[CA, MI, LE, & AL’s Poster]

YES: -*professional growth*
- recognition
- validation
- feedback
- money
- career opportunities
- member of new learning community
- interested
- collaboration
- national group
- personal challenge

NO:  - *fear of failure
- work amount
- time required
- money
- sacrifice
- professional jealousy
- isolation
- responsibility

MI:  OK, I'll talk. On the yes side there was professional growth, recognition, validation.

JU:  Stop on validation for a second. I want to ask you. WHY do you feel that so many teachers are hungry for validation?

CA:  It's not there. [LE: It's not provided] In [city school district], it's definitely provided by the media. Why did I teach Kindergarten for 32 years? Because I'm validated every minute of the day by my students! You don't receive that. It's just not built into our system.

LY:  When I went for it, I was the only person who taught my style in the whole school. They were always telling me "You're doing this wrong, you're doing this wrong. You need to get the book out and go page-by-page. You need to do this." (inaudible). Well I finally thought, well I'm just going to put it out there and see what these teachers say. I passed! Everybody kind of what-oh!

AL:  I think too, when I was thinking about validation I was thinking about validation from a body or a group that doesn't have any personal connection to me. My principal that had done my evaluation had always said "I'm doing a nice job." But they also have a personal connection to me. So I was wanting to get validation from a group just based on my teaching ability. Not if I'm a nice person or I work hard.
MI: And it's set up by people who are interested in setting high standards. Not be people who are teacher ed, or people who are governors, or whomever. 51 percent is always teachers in your field in your subject. So the standards are set up to say, "Can you teach to a certain level?" by people who are committed to teaching at that level. So it's totally independent. I think that's important.

JU: Are there alternative ways already that you think teachers could be validated beyond National Board? Has anybody thought "I wish they were doing this- I wish we would have this?"

MI: I think of the paper. On a daily week we ought to have "We visited so-and-so's classroom and this is what's going on!"

LE: When we have school and everyone else has a snow day, that's when they came to our building. Not when we were having an author's tea.

CA: And you can call them and say, "We're doing all these wonderful things." Someone took a gun to school -- we're going there!

LY: My husband works for that little [local newspaper company]. Of course, he doesn't usually go out when they're doing the fun things. He goes out when for exciting things. That's what they write about. That's what makes good news.

JU: What about other teachers and administration? What kind of validation did you ever want?

LY: I think you brought up an excellent point. It's based on personality, it's based on a lot of things.

MI: I think that a good principal takes care of that on a personal level. The principal and the PTO and what-not. I don't think that teachers have been slighted that way. Although there's lots of bad principals out there. But that's not where we've been slighted. Your kids give it back to you, the parents of kids that you teach do [CA: definitely], the administration when they've got their act together does. It's just that it ends at the street. You spend a lot of time. A lot of your identity is based on what you do there. But once you go out in the world "Oh, you're a teacher." [LY: I get "Oh you teach in [city school district]. What's the problem with all of the teachers there?" Their tests scores are horrible. They must not be doing anything down there.]

CA: I think validation for me was a little bit different. Because, it was more personal. I needed to know myself. I kept hearing, "Oh you're doing a good job, oh you're doing a wonderful job, you're a good teacher, I want my child in your class." But I thought when I'd go for NB I'd know for myself. Oh, yeah, maybe I really am. I think what I really liked was the fact that once I started reading the standards,
and LY and I kind of talked about it. That was my validation. That people all over the country believed that the way I was teaching was OK.

LY: Parents are sometimes, I mean they like you and you get a reputation. But they don't always understand -- you hear "If they would just do this. This is why the math scores are going down because they're not making them memorize their facts!" So they also take it to a personal level. This is a way to say this is why I do this, there's a body of people who agree with me.

LE: I saw it as self-validation. My personality, I don't often give that to myself. It's like almost every time I see myself doing something that connects with the NB, I think "OK, you did a good job." You just have to tell yourself that. That's a big piece of it.

AL: I was going to say that I think as teachers we're such "givers" in ways. Because we give so much of ourselves, that's our heart. It becomes personal -- your teaching. It's very personal to me. My principal said to us the other day "You're all replaceable. I can find somebody to fill your room." That's his attitude. I know that that's true on some level, but I want to feel like I'm irreplaceable. [MI: Ask your kids CA: To the kids you are!] I know, but still that hurt a lot. [MI: Did this happen in a faculty meeting or a personal meeting?] After a faculty meeting he basically said, "I'll find a good person to fill your spot." [CA: You said, "Just try!" (laughs)] [MI: You know, he can be replaced too.]

LY: I guess I came into teaching and I've always thought that I'm replaceable in a certain way. I know on a personal level I have value and stuff. But I kind of come with that colder attitude. In a way that's true. I'm thinking of managers too.

AL: But that doesn't make me feel like I should work hard because I'm not appreciated.

CA: There's a whole different mind-set. And a principal is supposed to be first of all a teacher. So if you're first of all a teacher, you don't really say things like that. But if you come from, like you say, from business where it's a WHOLE different things. These are products... These are NOT products. These are people!

LY: Which is why I left business too. Right, because everything is about the bottom line. The test scores are creating that environment. Principals are getting that kind of pressure and they're turning around and acting like a business.

LE: The other thing is is when you receive validation in a school building, you receive it as a whole group. Teacher appreciation, like everyone receives the same mug with the same candy.
JU: How do you feel when you get that?

GP3: It’s alright. It’s appreciation.

LE: When you do receive this, everything is across the board kind of thing. When you’ve been working 8 years, then this is how much money everybody makes when they’ve been working 8 years. That kind of thing.

LY: I said this once to our superintendent when we had a little luncheon. I said “You know every time someone comes in and says you’re doing a good job. They’ve all said to me, ‘I don’t know what you’re doing in here, but you’re doing a good job!’ I would rather they come in and say, “This is what you’re doing well and this is what you need to improve.” Really look at what I’m doing. That’s why evaluations are not validation. It’s because of our union, the way it’s structured in [city school district], to get a “U” on an evaluation. They all have “S” and “U” for one thing. There’s no continuum. I remember my PAR teacher once said to me, “Well, here you grade yourself and I’ll grade you.” I put a whole bunch in the middle. I didn’t realize it’s a whole political tool and whatever. And she gave me straight “S’s” and I’m like “Wow, she wasn’t very critical at all I didn’t think.” [MI: You got a lucky PAR person!]

CA: We tend to be much more critical of ourselves. I remember doing that way back in student teaching and I gave myself these low marks and she’s like “Why did you do that?” That’s why it’s also good to have students evaluate themselves. So that they can be more critical.

MI: (referring to the poster again) The money starts rolling in, you have other career opportunities. You’re members of a new learning community. It connects with the National Group and the collaboration with the National Group.

LY: I agree with that too. We went through the 1st year. That group, we know each other really well. We’ve been to Washington DC, we’ve been to North Carolina, and we’ve been to this and that. You become like a little community. [MI: It hurts when they leave you off the loop!]

MI: And the personal challenge. On the bad side, fear of failure. Or we should say fear of not achieving certification. The amount of work that is involved. Some people are just doing it for the money. Particularly in North Carolina. And, some people can’t afford the $2300 to do this, which by the way has gone up. It was $2000. [CA: When we went through it it was $900] You have a lot of sacrifice to do this both personal and professional.

There’s a lot of professional jealousy. There’s a lot of people isolated by the professional jealousy and isolated by the work that is involved that year.
And then, some more responsibility. They may ask you to be on committees. You never know how that's going to come back at you. They just released the new 12th grade exit standards last week. All the different areas of the school were talking about it this week and some of the math teachers are very upset about it. I was on that committee and saying “Now wait, let me explain what they mean.” “How do you know what they mean?” So there's a lot of responsibility involved in doing this. There's many, many levels in which that responsibility may come back to you. Some people have made it the rest of their life and are doing all sorts of things for NB. And are becoming players in the national education community. Some just in the district they turn to and say, “Can you do this, would you do that?” And for some, it all starts to be a drain. After all, you did this because you are a good teacher. Suddenly now they want you out of the classroom every ten seconds. I guess it's true that you sort of widen your scope of who you can touch when you teach teachers, but you're a teacher for these group of kids.

CA: You have to think, that's what you DON'T want to do. And that's what's happened in most districts. Why do we want to take the accomplished teachers out of the classrooms?

AL: I was thinking about that. That's one of the reasons that I wanted to do it. Because I wanted to grow and be recognized but stay in the classroom.

MI: That's the whole purpose of it. That you are in a career path that keeps us in front of kids.

JU: What top praise and concern do you have for National Board based on your own experience? Something you think is really outstanding that the NB system is contributing to teachers, and also something that you might have a concern about that NB might be doing. We just mentioned it might be encouraging quality teachers to leave the classroom.

(Skipped do to time/ but collected INDEX CARDS)

CA: Pro: The desire & opportunity to have accomplished teachers in the classroom
Con: The conflicting presentation of opportunities to leave

LE: Pro: Provides national opportunities
Con: Good teachers leaving the classroom for these opportunities

MI: Pro: Encouraging meaningful professional development
Con: Funding and continuing their mission

LY: Pro: Sets high standards and judges people in a manner that is as objective as possible. Allows teachers to take a risk to validate accomplished teaching

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Con: Becoming political animal. Sometimes seems to be an entity that just promotes itself.

JU: What do you think is an appropriate way to evaluate teacher effectiveness. I think National Board is presenting one model. They’re saying “Let’s get a portfolio, let’s get a video of the teacher” Look at the people who are doing the evaluation -- they’re people who don’t know you. You’re sending away this information. I’ve heard other people come up with alternative ways that would make each other into effective teachers as well. I guess I should say evaluate. Just think of any model that you can come up with for what you’ve thought of in all your years of teaching where you’ve thought “Boy, this would be a great way to help evaluate teachers and do it more effectively.” Some of you have already said your “S and U” evaluation doesn’t mean much. What would mean something?

LE: I think you need multiple pieces.

LY: A whole bunch of pieces. It’s not just one person coming into your classroom watching one lesson on one day and taking off. One piece that I think about is missing is receiving feedback from your students on a continual basis on how they feel that they’re learning and how they feel that you’re teaching. Am I meeting their needs? They will tell you!

CA: The kindergartners would now. They may say, “I don’t like your hair today.” But nothing about my teaching.

LE: But something like on this activity where you could say, “OK, well I reached these 5 kids, but this activity totally didn’t reach these 20.”

GP: Let’s work as one big group! (SEE POSTER)

[Group Poster]
- Student evaluation
- Teacher appraisal (colleague mentor)
- Flexibility to meet needs of teachers
- Review cycles (principal, parents, students)
- Open review by principal (tell concept teaching & assess. tool; NOT management emphasis)
- Have principal co-teach (taught all day, reflect & values reflection)
- Must be time laps in evaluation over time (see in normal cycle)
- Multi-faceted (concern of males evaluating; prefer “objective” ECC colleague)
- Want a good teacher to evaluate and get both positive and negative detailed feedback

CA: They had a program in place at one time called Teacher Appraisal Process. I thought it was wonderful. But the process went out the window. It was a political thing that had something to do with the union. I thought it was a wonderful
program because you chose a colleague to be your mentor, and then that colleague would meet with you occasionally but also visit you in your classroom. And you would say to that colleague, “These are things I want you to look for while I’m teaching.” Now it wasn’t your principal but it was like I went to another school to do this for a colleague. This was just 5 years ago. We were up for evaluation. Instead of just your principal coming in and sitting there for a few minutes, this was how they were doing the teacher evaluation process. [LY: But union driven] well, the union got in and said something about it. But anyway, I thought it was ideal because I had a colleague who asked me to come to my room and “Would you watch for these things. Because I feel like I’m calling on the boys too much.” Lots of things. Then you would watch them for one day or more and then you would meet together and then you would talk about those things. You would give them the notes that you took. Then you would meet with them and you would talk about those things. That was just really helpful to say, “Oh, I thought I was doing that. Or Maybe I’m not doing that as much as I thought.” I thought that was wonderful but that just went out the window. But I think it’s real effective.

AL: My former principal let us have flexibility in how we wanted to be evaluated. This was the second one of the year. An option that some people took. One of the 3rd grade teachers asked me to come down and do her evaluation. My principal taught my students. I went down and worked with the 3rd grade teacher and I was looking for ways that she was helping the kids get ready for the 4th grade proficiency test. It was a great opportunity for me. And for the other teacher, she seemed to appreciate it. The principal got to teach my students and they were happy with the change. So it was great! So I would say some flexibility to meet the needs of the individual teachers. I don’t think one thing is going to work for everybody.

LE: At this building I’m in, we have review cycles. So in your first few years, you’re evaluated four times a year. Twice are unexpected and two are scheduled. After you get your tenure, then you go on cycles. One year, we’ll be receiving feedback from parents, another year we’ll receive feedback from other colleagues, then another year the principal will come in again. We go on a 3-year cycle.

LY: I also think, the school I’m at, the principal HAS to schedule a visit. I like LE’s idea that it has to be multi-faceted type of thing. One thing is that someone should be able to walk into your room at any time and observe what’s going on. Because of our union, and probably because some of our principals have misused that. [MI: Oh yeah!!] They misuse that unfortunately. In the purest form, your principal should be able to walk in at anytime and observe what’s going on. Also, I think something that would be good. For a scheduled one, “This is the concept I’m trying to teach. This is the assessment tool.” Then sit down with the principal and look at the assessment tool. Let’s see how the kids did on the assessment. Were you effective in communicating? What could you do? We never bring the kids really into it at least in our school district. It’s more “Oh
your kids were getting loud.” It’s very management oriented. They don’t have their eye on the learning.

MI: No, they don’t. It’s management. So much management

AL: I think too, what I was thinking about is having a principal co-teach with you. To plan together, to teach together. My former teacher did that with me last year. [CA: Who WAS your former principal? GP3: Wow! MI: How many teachers are in your building?] There’s about 27 teachers.

MI: It works on an elementary basis. There’s 150 in the high school. [CA: There’s more principals in a high school too]. Four. [CA: That’s a lot!] Yeah, well they range in effectiveness also.

AL: She taught with me the entire day. We planned together, we talked together, and we reflected together [CA: Wow!] On how did they learn, what did I see? [CA: That’s great interaction — I like that!] I loved it.

LY: You see the transitions, you see really everything. Not that 20 minute lesson. We were at some kind of in-service and I remember one of the teachers saying, “oh this is the trick I use every time my principal tells me she’s coming into evaluate. [CA: Oh no!] It’s the silent game on top of it. So the kids aren’t talking. It works out perfectly. I always get excellent reviews.” And I thought that’s pretty scary.

MI: That’s why National Board is a way to validate teachers doing what they’re supposed to do consistently.

CA: Someone needs to know what learning is and evaluate it.

MI: I think there has to be time lapse. You have to see someone with the same group of kids over a period of weeks and maybe to get a true evaluation would have to be hours in the classroom. So you see not just the one lesson that the kids have modeled and the teacher’s modeled. So you see them in their normal cycle of things. The principal gets there BEFORE the kids so they’re sitting there when the kids come in. Not that they’re in the hallway talking to someone else and you’re getting started and suddenly they come in. In a high school environment they’d much rather have teachers than administration.

CA: I like the multi-faceted idea for another reason too. Because most of my principals have been males. [MI: What’s wrong with males?] Well, I’m going to tell you. Most of my male principals had no concept of what you teach in kindergarten. They’re afraid of kindergarteners. They have no concept of what I should be doing. They don’t know what little tiny kids do and what’s acceptable for them. I don’t like little tiny kids sitting quietly when they’re supposed to at
their centers and that kind of thing. I WANT them talking to each other, they learn from each other. They have no idea about the centers being real learning. They have no idea that it takes a great deal of organization to have 10 learning centers running at the same time and students being independent enough to go and complete those activities and have that record keeping to move to others as they need to move to others as they complete it. It probably looks like chaos to people who don’t understand what’s going on. But people who understand what’s going on think “Whoa, kindergarteners are doing that?” But a lot of times there are males that tended to teach 5th & 6th grade and then they became principals and didn’t understand little kids and how they learn.

JU: Who would you prefer to do the evaluation?

CA: I would prefer a colleague. Not a colleague who necessarily is a friend of mine but a colleague who is an early childhood person who maybe shares that philosophy. Because they would understand what was going on.

LY: Accomplished in a way too.

CA: You need someone who can understand.

MI: This all works again against keeping us in the classroom because you’d like to have someone doing the evaluation who you can comfortably say, “They recognize good teaching when they see it because they’re a good teacher.” The ones that self-selected as going for NB, but we’re certainly not the entire pool.

LE: They need to provide you with enough feedback so that you end up gaining insights and ideas to make that lesson better and more effective. Not just “Oh, that was wonderful!”

CA: With the assessors, when they look at each others’ videotapes, I got to say to them “Let’s go through what’s expected and then let’s see if the people are meeting this.” Instead of saying “Oh, I liked your lesson.” These lessons were bad. But they didn’t want to criticize each person. So then I removed the personal part. I said, “Let’s evaluate it according to the standards and the directions.”

LY: Another thing NB does “Don’t be afraid to fail because we want to know your reflection on it.” I think a principal that does that too. I was observed last year for CGI and I was doing something kind of new and I didn’t write the question very well and the kids just were flat. So I reworded the question. By the time I reworded it we moved forward. She said, “Right in front of me I saw what you were thinking and how you made the changes right there.” She recognized that as a GOOD thing, not as “Oh my gosh I can’t believe that you handled it that way cause the kids couldn’t do it.” She recognized that I ?? within that short little
lesson she observed. That’s the first principal I’ve ever had that really understands my teaching.

**JU:** What are some of the positive aspects of recognizing teachers who are excellent? On the pink, what is a negative aspect? Something maybe that you’ve experienced.

**Positives:**
- Increased satisfaction
- Increased motivation
- Better teaching
- Opens avenues to participate in larger education theatre
- Validation
- Encourages continual growth and effort
- Career opportunities while remaining in the classroom
- Become role models
- Let others know about the process
- Validation of the process

**Negatives:**
- Professional jealousy (may be related to some underlying perceptions)
- Jealousy
- Professional jealousy others seem to resent attention
- Causes rifts among teachers. Sometimes spoken but usually unspoken
- Causes competition between staff

**JU:** There’s one negative that a bunch of you hit on right here. Jealousy. I would like to ask you to share. Someone wrote that it may be related to some underlying perception. First, why do we think that the jealousy is there in the 1st place?

**LY:** There was a whole seminar at one National Board meeting on this.

**LE:** I think because it causes competition between teachers. The way it’s phrased that “It recognizes teachers who are excellent.” So it causes competition between staff members because they feel like if they’re not recognized and they’re not excellent, then it causes division in your staff. Those people who support professional growth and those people who don’t see professional growth as part of their job. They see their job as “I come in at 8 and I leave at 3. My day is done.” I think that’s where it is. I don’t really receive a lot of jealousy I don’t think in my building. I get more of “Oh you had to top me again by putting that up in the hallway- you Nationally Board Certified teacher!”

**GP3:** That’s true!
LE: The other girls that I can imagine would be more the back-stabbing girls of cliques. But the staff I’m in now is just the guy across the hall who likes to taunt everybody. I really don’t hear it from anybody else.

LY: The first time I met our superintendent. My principal said, “She’s a National Board teacher.” She said, “Oh let me bow down to you!” with a very snide attitude. That was my first impression of this person. [Name of school superintendent] said that to me. I was trying to keep an open mind about her.

People I’ve heard the most negative comments from are [teachers of district reading program]. I really believe it’s because there’s no certification for them. They were kind of the people before who were more recognized [CA: yeah]. I think also for people who don’t have opportunity. If you’re a principal you don’t have the opportunity to do it unless you go back in the classroom. There’s certain people who will never have that opportunity because they’ll never go back to the classroom. I think that’s another thing too.

MI: But National Boards are for teachers!

LY: We’re thinking of it for principals.

MI: And we’ll encourage their organization!

LE: You were saying that principals should be a teacher first. I think there’s many principals who perceive themselves as teachers. It sounded like You’re teacher (AL) is much more like that. Then the ones who do administration because they want to help teachers I think they see themselves that way.

CA: But then Barb Kelley said that to me. She’s Chairman of the National Board. She really meant it genuinely when she said, “Well I feel like I should bow down to you all!” Because she knew the amount of work that went into it.

LY: I didn’t feel it was genuine?

CA: Then why does she call me all the time?

LY: It doesn’t mean she doesn’t know it’s not a good thing. But I’m just saying the whole thing was very weird.

MI: There’s a whole sense of “So you think you’re better than I am?” I think that’s were a lot of the jealousy is.

AL: I think that I might not be good at anything special, so why did she get that? She’s not so great. She’s not doing anything so great!
MI: No, you're just a good teacher. If more teachers would try, they could get that same recognition. You took a risk!

LY: That's a great point. It looks the same when I walk by. The desk looks the same, or this looks the same, or they've got the same thing on the walls. When I take my next step. But what is really going on in there?

CA: Yeah, that underlying architecture.

AL: I was talking to my husband just the other day. He said, "Oh, AL, you realize that's so petty don't you." But I've noticed this year that a lot more teachers seem to point out when my students misbehave [MI: oh yeah!] or when they're doing something wrong [MI: Sure CA: uh huh] or if they get in trouble on the playground. They say, "Well your kids were awful in the lunch room today [CA: mmm huh]. Maybe it's just me! [MI & CA: mmm, huh. No Not just you] I want to know about that so that I can work with them on that. I almost sense that it's like they enjoy showing that [CA: yeah!!!] I don't want to believe that it's true [MI: no, no it's true].

CA: It's true. I had that before I was National Board Certified. It was like "Your kids did this!" You could see it in their eyes, they were just delighted because my kids acted up in the hallway, in the lunchroom, or on the playground. Or, "You always get the good kids." [GP3: uh-huh!] Oh, they always put the best kids in your class.

AL: And with kindergarten, they have no idea who they're putting there!

CA: Tell me about it! One year, at my old school, another K teacher said, "We're going to sit down and we're going to make up the class when they come in." We did boy, girl, boy, girl, black, white, black, white, to try to equalize. It was the same thing!

LY: It also goes back to that teachers are touchy feely ?? There's nothing else in teaching you do that you don't pass. Everything you do, so long as you get your Masters, it's very rare that you don't pass. But this is something that you can do that you actually might or might not pass. [AL: Chances are greater that you won't pass.]

JU: Do you feel like the jealousy is heightened by National Board recognition versus other kinds of recognition?

MI: OH, yeah. Sure. Sure!

JU: Last year a teacher got an award for being sweet and kind to others in our building. When they announced the person and called them up, the teachers
around me went, "Uh, who do they think they are?" Why can't teachers be happy for somebody. Where is that insecurity coming from that makes us so jealous as a profession?

LE: We're woman.

CA: I think that's true.

JU: Is it because we're socialistic?

MI: I think so. I think so. I think one of the reasons that people do go for National Board is that we are insecure about how well we're doing. Again, kids tell us and particular parents tell us. But so much of that is easily written off as "Oh, they like me. Of course they're going to say good things." It's how do I measure myself? If someone else is being put up, it's "Oh, are they going to look at me next? Am I doing what I'm supposed to?" If no one is put ahead of the pack, then everyone's safe. If suddenly there's a real stratification according to how well are and how well you do. There's a chance that I'm going to find that I'm doing something that I don't want to do.

JU: I'm wondering if you don't take seriously the evaluation that we have, which is the way that we can judge our effectiveness, how do we validate? How do we understand when we're doing a good job? How can we be secure as a professional if we can't take seriously the evaluations that we undergo? How much do you think the type of evaluation we have impacts how secure or insecure we feel?

MI: Yeah, it's hard to get a true evaluation of how you are in the classroom.

LY: We got a bonus.

MI: But it's not WHO did what, we did it as a whole building.

LY: But I have a problem with the gain-sharing. Because I did the same stuff at [past city school] as I did at [another past city school], and if I had been at [first past city school], I wouldn't have gotten the gain shares. [CA: Because it was tied to test scores] I mean I liked the extra money.

MI: Last year at Northland, in the middle of January when the test scores came back, we got the questions- what are the math teachers doing to improve the scores so we get our gain sharing money. Now we'd already made it in the math. People didn't understand that. How we did it, I don't know. So I got a check in the mail that we'd made gain sharing. Not to throw it back in the same way- "What in the world did the phys-ed teacher have to do with the math proficiency scores, and the science proficiency scores, and the attendance going on.

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CA: The whole child.

MI: I didn’t care, I take it as a building we either succeed or fail. But when somebody says, “What are you doing?” Well, “what are they doing?” It turns out of course that a good phys ed teacher is doing things for all the proficiencies. Across the board- you can use phys ed for citizenship. Just talk about citizenship in the phys ed arena. They’ll learn as much about that there as in social studies.

LY: There has to be some allowances, yes, if we’re going to do monetary differences. Because I was teaching in the inner city and I’m not a valid teacher when I teach there. But when I’m teaching in the middle class neighborhood, then I become a valid teacher. I did not change from one place to the other. Looking at the test scores. Because I’ve been from the highest socioeconomic status in our district to the lowest and now to the middle, I’ve had some really good experience and I’ve seen some differences with each one.

CA: Talking about this jealousy too, a lot of times I think the teachers who raise the most ruckus or make the most snide comments are probably those who are not as committed to the profession as others and so they see what you’re doing as making them look worse. So every time you do this, then they’re going to expect me to do this. [GP3: Yes!]

MI: If they’re going to do it, then they’re going to expect everyone to do it. Now we’re going to have to work harder.

LY: I talked to someone, I said, “You should go for National Board.” She said, “No, I’ve been teaching for many years and I don’t need anybody else to validate my teaching.” I really felt that this person did it some for insecurity but I also felt that she really did feel it too.

JU: I’ve had people who said, “I don’t need to do this for validation!”

LY: I thought she was an accomplished teacher just from my observation. And I felt that she was a respected profession. And she worked hours. So it’s like they’re a maverick group or whatever. It’s just not an interest for them.

JU: We had an interesting discussion in that group. One man talked about teachers needing to get off that kick of wanting to be recognized and validated. That they get it from the parents and the students and that’s enough. And you know it in your heart. Everyone else just jumped down his throat! “No way! You’re an administrator and we need to be having formal ways of recognizing.”
CA: That’s an interesting statement, because a couple of weeks ago I was in a meeting with the governor. That’s one of the things that he said was “How can we recognize and support teachers?” [MI: Nice to hear!]

LY: It tends to become the same teachers. They give the Milken award, and it was like one small circle of people that have been Ohio Teacher of the Year, and then they become the Milken person. I even look at myself from where I fit, I’ve talked to CA about this. When National Board first came, they started having facilitators. Well, certain people get called all the time. [JU: you think there’s a snowball effect? MI: yes, unfortunately] But I don’t care. But it’s the same person who get chosen. Some people actively seek them, which I did not actively seek them. That’s also another thing too. Even with the NB, you get the certain people, when you’re talking at the Governors’ level, it’s going to probably be the same people we’ve seen recognized. So maybe we need to consider multiple ways of recognition too. [CA: uhhh, hmmm]

CA: But it’s the same thing we’re talking about with the renewal process. We need to look at this whole picture because there are people who have left the classroom. That does not mean that they’re not still growing and that they don’t still have the NB philosophy and are using it daily. We’re still teachers. We need to be able to recognize them wherever they are. This is not going to be an easy task! That was an important part, that there are a lot of teachers who have left the classroom. Then, a lot of teachers are in the classroom and they’re still learning and they’re still applying it.

LE: For example, if you go into administration or I’m also certified as a school psychologist. So if I go and I do something else in education, am I still recognized?

CA: This is what we’re working on.

MI: Yes!

LY: It’s a tricky thing. I kind of think of businesses too. They do stuff like employee of the year. It causes the exact same problems there too. Recognition will always cause problems in some way, shape, or form.

CA: Nature of the beast.

JU: I’ve been thinking about lately when you have students and you want to talk to their parents about their strengths. It’s not my main goal to categorize my students that this is the top and the smartest and the most accomplished and these are the dumbest. My goal is I think of multiple intelligences and I try to think of their personal strengths? [CA: That’s right] What can I highlight about this student to their parents? What if they did that for teachers? I wouldn’t have to go
down the hall and hear "She's accomplished, she's the best, and you're not."
What if I heard "She's very good in this area, and you're good in this area [CA: That's right. That's right!] and you have this talent. If you have something you want to do better, go to them."

LE: Isn't that what the new certification process is doing? You have a specialty area like K-3 then you also get (inaudible).

CA: Also, did you know that all that licensure and all that stuff goes with NB now. It compliments it.

LY: In teacher training, if you came out of a philosophy and it has nothing to do with NB philosophy and you were never validated for that, then why seek the validation there?

One of my teaching partners went to Catholic school her whole life. She thinks to her accomplished teaching looks a lot different than what I do. We never seem to get together and seem to really get down to it and talk about it. Even the way that we recognize students, to me, is the key as to how you want to be recognized as adults. The way she recognizes them are totally different ways than I recognize them. I think that says a lot right there.

I don't believe in any awards. I don't believe in Star Student. There's some book, and I haven't read it, about why they're detrimental. I don't believe in the Honor roll things for kids in the elementary. But that's just my personal feeling. It really bothers me a lot.

CA: One reason I like Star Student is because there are some kids who are never going to make it academically. And that gives them a chance for somebody to say something good to them. Because what I find is that the problems will keep perpetuating themselves because those kids are always in trouble or always targeted. Nobody's coming around and saying "Oh, I like the way you walked down the hall. I like the way you did that."

LY: Parents would come to me and say, "Why didn't you choose my kid as Star Student?"

CA: What I would like to see is the whole school, and I have said this to our principal and I have said this to our [school discipline program] teacher, I would like the whole school to get a list of the children who are having the most problems and the whole staff just bombard them with praise whenever they catch them doing something good. I think those kids would turn around just like that. They would turn around so fast not just socially but academically. I can see that in AL too, because every time everybody responded she said, "That's good. That's great! That's good." I'm that kind of person too. I'm just that eternal optimist. I'm

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always seeing the bright side of things. I wish people would stop saying this to
me but they used to say, “CA you’ll wake up one day and see the real world and
you’ll stop thinking like that. Yeah, but there’s still good in everybody. I just
have to see everybody build a campaign. You know that happened in South
Carolina. The superintendent turned around the whole district by making
everybody positive. I just would like to see that happen.

LY: That’s different. We do honor roll in 1st grade and start stratifying the students.

CA: Kindergarten.

LY: I don’t even want to go there. It just hurts me to do that.

JU: How do you feel about the professional status of teaching. How we’re perceived
as teachers. What do you think we can do to increase our professional status in
the United States?

AL: I think that we should be able to articulate research that backs up our teaching.
That would improve our professional status.

LY: I think that we as teachers tend to say, “Oh, I only have this many days off.” It
doesn’t matter, that’s one thing that upsets people the most. The amount of time
we have off. Those kind of things that we can’t control. I think, like you said,,
we have to start being articulate and talk like professionals and act like
professionals. We have to take more pride in what we do.

LE: It’s not OK that they represent you on the calendar, you’re always stereotyped.
It’s not OK that you are at a cocktail party and someone’s saying “Oh, she’s just a
teacher.” Then I feel like throwing out my whole [MI: You ought to ask them,
how is it that you know how to read? How did you learn how to write?]

LY: Well, everyone thinks that they know how to teach so you have to kind of take it
to that next level and say, “How would you challenge this group of students?”
Sometimes I just throw out a hypothetical to get them going.

CA: Even more than that, I’d just like for community people to come in and try to
教 something. I mean, board members, they don’t have the real picture. Even
people who are quote “downtown” now. To just come back into the classroom
and you take my class for just one hour. No, I think they would be ready to leave
in 30 minutes. [JU: My husband can take about 10 minutes] I think they would
just have a different picture of what goes on.

LE: I think one thing that helps with that. Businesses come into the schools. I have a
friend that was very much the person that I was always arguing with. “Business is
always better than education, business is what runs the country.” I’m saying, “If
you’re not educated, you can’t run the country.’” So we went on and on about that. Then, his business had an opportunity where they had to participate in going into high schools and different types of classrooms that taught economy. They had to do a business project with these kids. His eyes opened like that. He came back and said, “What strategies do you use? How do you get them to listen to you?” And he was working with AP students. It turned around his respect for teachers. [CA: My student whose nose runs all day. (laughter) MI: I have to go to the bathroom!]
APPENDIX F

Sample Guide for Grounded Survey
Grounded Survey

1. What **family values or beliefs** did you grow up with that you feel most influenced your role as a teacher today?

2. What childhood **life-experiences** most influenced the kind of teacher that you are today?

3. As a child, what mode(s) of learning were you most likely to enjoy (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, spatial, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, natural)? Do you feel that this style of learning has had an impact on your own teaching methods? If so, in what ways?

4. In what ways does your "ideal" picture of yourself as a professional educator differ from the "reality" of the role that you play in your field?

5. (Referring to question 4) What do you think it will take to overcome each of these differences?

6. What motivates you to return to the classroom year after year in the face of the obstacles listed above?

7. What are some of the most personally rewarding ways in which you've received validation throughout your career as a professional educator?

8. What has changed most about the way in which you perceive your role as an educator throughout your years in the classroom? Why do you think that these changes have occurred?
APPENDIX G

Sample Grounded Survey Transcript
1. **What family values or beliefs** did you grow up with that you feel most influenced your role as a teacher today?

   One family belief that has influenced my teaching is that I am capable of doing anything that I choose to do. Therefore, I haven't chosen to teach because there are few options available but rather because it is what I want to do. Other values that have been influential are those of high standards and a strong work ethic.

2. **What childhood life-experiences** most influenced the kind of teacher that you are today?

   I had a very fun and carefree childhood and I want the children in my classroom to experience that joy of just being a kid. Through third grade, I was in classrooms that were fairly traditional and structured. In fourth grade, we moved to Worthington and there was more problem solving and cooperative learning situations going on. Since these are the experiences I remember most, I figure the children in my classroom might feel the same way and so I try to provide those experiences as often as possible.

3. **As a child, what mode(s) of learning were you most likely to enjoy (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, spatial, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, natural)?** Do you feel that this style of learning has had an impact on your own teaching methods? If so, in what ways?

   I am definitely a visual, kinesthetic, interpersonal learner. In the classroom, I understand a child's need to move around and to interact with others. I have had to work harder to understand children who learn in other modes and who tend to be introverted. As stated above, I also was influenced by hands-on, cooperative learning.

4. **In what ways does your “ideal” picture of yourself as a professional educator differ from the “reality” of the role that you play in your field?**

   My ideal role of myself as a teacher is that of a facilitator in a room that has a constructivist philosophy. While I do bring that philosophy to the classroom, I am extremely hampered by proficiency tests, pacing guides, benchmark tests, and the more traditional philosophies of teachers, administration and the community in which I work.
5. (Referring to question 4) What do you think it will take to overcome each of these differences?

It is difficult to overcome the influence that the proficiency test has made via pacing and benchmarks. However, I am finding that I am slowly winning over people around me. Although other teachers may not have my philosophy, they seem to respect what I do in the classroom. I try to educate parents about my rationale when they are unsure and by explaining to children why we are doing what we do. My principal is supportive, but the overall philosophy of our school district administration is very traditional. Frankly, I would probably have to teach in a private school with an alternative philosophy to really be the ideal teacher that I want to be.

6. What motivates you to return to the classroom year after year in the face of the obstacles listed above?

This is my second career and I have had a few "jobs" in between careers. Although I can be successful in many areas, I feel that this career best uses the talents that I have at this point in time. However, I am in my ninth year of teaching and could see myself leaving the classroom by year 15. At this point in time, I am not ready to step out of the role of being first line instructor. Also, I feel that I am facilitating children's learning. If I feel I am no longer effective I will leave the classroom.

7. What are some of the most personally rewarding ways in which you've received validation throughout your career as a professional educator?

National Board was definitely a validation for me at the time I received it because I tend to be much less traditional than my fellow teachers. I also receive validation when people whom I respect professionally compliment me for specific reasons. For instance, "I liked the way you made changes for that child to help him become a successful reader" rather than "You're a good teacher." I also have received a lot of support from parents, but the most validating comment was, "My child never had to think like she does until she was in your classroom." Also, I have had good experiences teaching, and one very devastating experience which have allowed me to become skilled in self validation.

8. What has changed most about the way in which you perceive your role as an educator throughout your years in the classroom? Why do you think that these changes have occurred?

Throughout my career, I have always seen my role as facilitator and that
has not changed. I have begun to recognize my role in making children successful in testing situations even though I don't like it and hope something changes soon!
APPENDIX H

Recommendations for Interviewing
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERVIEWING
(Seidman, 1991, p. 56)

1) **Listen More, Talk Less**
Remember to listen more and to talk less. Researchers must listen on three levels to: what the participant is saying, what the participant may be guarding, and what the participant is conveying through nonverbal clues.

2) **Follow Up On What Participants Say**
Follow up on what the participant says by asking for clarification and seeking concrete details. The researcher may request that the participant share a story or build on what the participant has already begun to share.

3) **Ask Questions When You Do Not Understand**
Ask questions when you do not understand everything that the participant shares. Because the interview questions frequently build on previous questions, it is critical to clarify any ambiguous responses.

4) **Ask To Hear More About The Subject**
Ask to hear more about a subject if you feel as if the interviewee might have more to say. Often times, this leads the interviewee to feel appreciated and valued.

5) **Explore, Don’t Probe**
Explore but do not probe areas of tension (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Researchers must resist the temptation for an ill-timed investigation of the participants’ words that may cause a defensive shift in interaction.

6) **Ask Real Questions**
Practice asking real questions. Real questions are those for which the interviewer truly doesn’t anticipate a response.

7) **Avoid Leading Questions**
Avoid asking leading questions that directly influence the participant’s response through the intonation or wording of the question.

8) **Ask Open-Ended Questions**
Pose open-ended questions that allow the participant to answer in any direction in which they desire (Patton, 1990).

9) **Follow Up, Don’t Interrupt**
Follow up with another question only after the interviewee has finished their first response. Often a researcher may be tempted to interrupt a response to pose their next question. Instead, it is recommended that the interviewer jot a note to later pose the question and to prevent interrupting the flow of the participant’s talk.
10) **Ask Participants To Talk To You As If You Were Someone Else**
Utilize Patton’s (1990) role-playing questions in which the participant and researcher take on a different voice.

11) **Ask Participants To Tell A Story**
Seidman suggests that asking participants to tell a story about what they are discussing may better illuminate their experience.

12) **Keep Participants Focused And Ask For Concrete Details**
Guide interviewees to the focus of the interview by asking them for concrete details of their experience before exploring attitudes and opinions about it.

13) **Do Not Take The Ebbs And Flows Of Interviewing Too Personally**
While participants may become so involved in the first interview that they share very openly, do not be surprised if in subsequent interviews the interviewee initially appears to be reluctance to share (Spradley, 1979).

14) **Share Experiences On Occasion**
Periodically the researcher should feel free to share their own similar experience if relevant. This may encourage the interviewee to continue sharing. However, be careful not to overuse this technique or the interview may be distorted.

15) **Ask Participants To Reconstruct; Not to Remember**
Rather than explicitly asking participants to rely on their memories, interviewers should ask participants to describe a past event in as much detail as possible.

16) **Avoid Reinforcing Your Participants’ Responses**
Rather than positively or negatively reinforcing interviewees’ responses with “uh huh” or “O.K.,” it is recommended that researchers refer later in an interview to something that the participant said earlier (Richardson et al., 1965).

17) **Explore Laughter**
Whether it be funny, nervous, or ironic laughter, it may be helpful for the researcher to directly ask the participant for the reasons for its use if unclear.

18) **Follow Your Hunches**
Trust your instincts. When a difficult question emerges it will likely be worth asking the question.

19) **Use An Interview Guide Cautiously**
It is important to utilize the interview guide flexibly to follow the individual interests and thoughts of the participants related to the research topic.
20) **Tolerate Silence**
Rather than become impatient and uncomfortable during pauses in dialogue, the researcher must give considerable time before asking their next question. Thoughtfulness takes time and may permit the researcher to hear things he/she would have never heard if hurried.